

SUMMER 1961

3/6

# SIGHT AND SOUND



THE FILM QUARTERLY





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FILMS  
FROM

# FORD

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PARIS

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TO  
DAGENHAM

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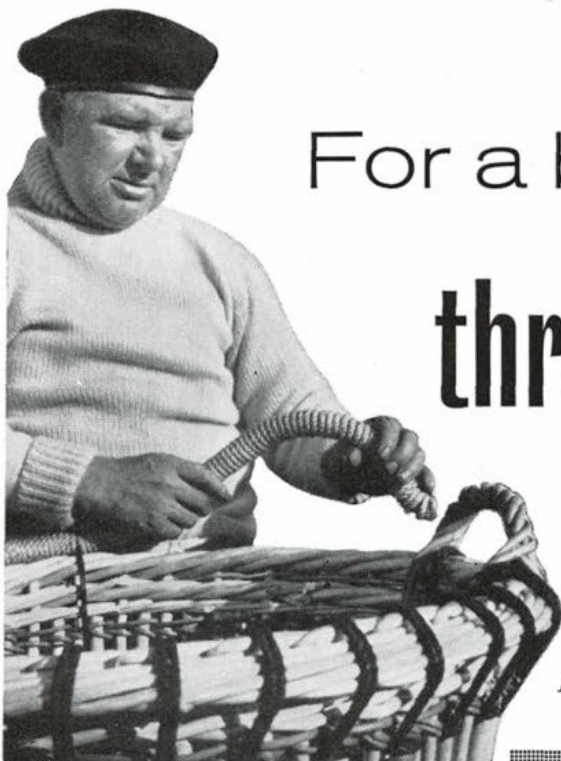
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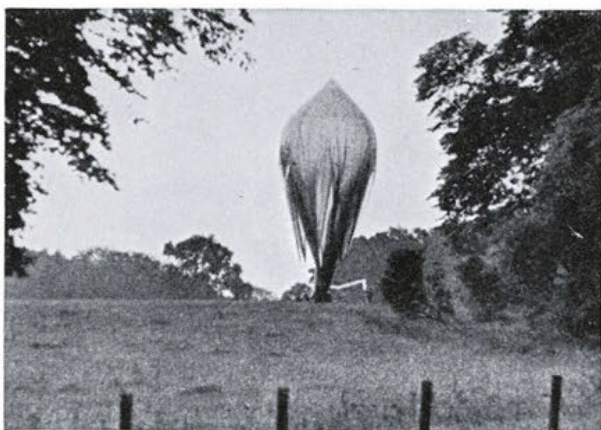
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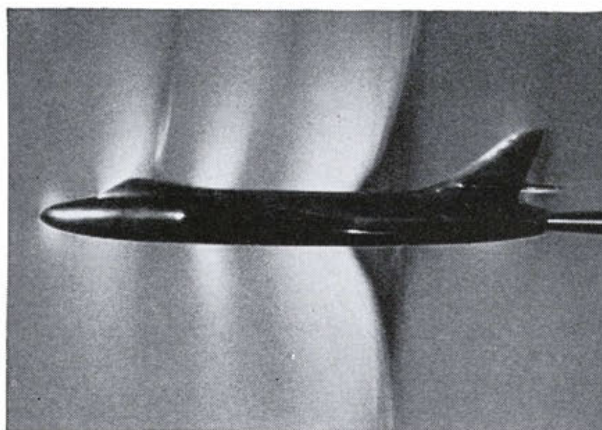
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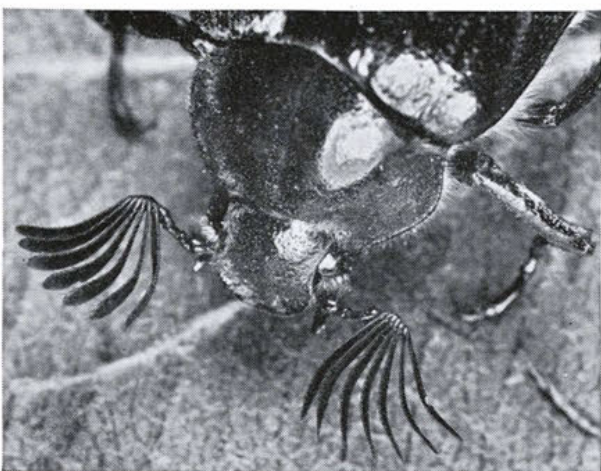




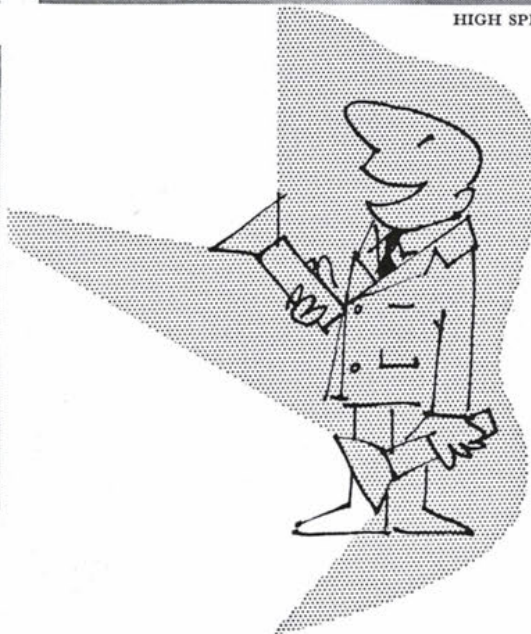
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A BP FILM



# SIGHT AND SOUND

## THE INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

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SIGHT AND SOUND is an independent critical magazine sponsored and published by the British Film Institute. It is not an organ for the expression of official British Film Institute policy; signed articles represent the views of their authors, and not necessarily those of the Editorial Board.

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# AN ENQUIRY

## The cost of Independence

When Shirley Clarke made her screen version of *The Connection* in New York a few months ago, she financed the production by methods familiar in the theatre but almost untested in the cinema. A couple of hundred small investors took shares in the enterprise; they were given no guarantee that they would ever see their money again, and there was no advance commitment to a distributor. John Cassavetes' *Shadows* was only completed after money had been raised through a broadcast appeal. Lionel Rogosin went into the business of running a cinema to ensure that *On the Bowery* and *Come Back, Africa* got a showing in New York. In France, some young directors have been able to finance their films out of legacies, money lent or given by parents or friends.

Nothing like this has yet happened in England—nor does it seem very likely to happen. The hazards dogging the steps of young film-makers are too well known to need elaboration: costs of production, difficulty of getting a distribution guarantee, and so on. But these are largely the problems of an industry geared to the production of commercial pictures; and



people who are prepared to approach the cinema in a different way—who have, that is, a passionate and desperate concern—have found overseas that it is possible not to fight an industrial system from within, but as nearly as possible to disregard it.

The percentage of successes among these independent productions is not necessarily going to be higher than with films financed in a more orthodox way. Independence, enthusiasm, devotion, are no guarantee of quality. But this is not the point. The reason for supporting these ventures is that they make it possible, on however limited a scale, for a feature film to become as personal and unpredictable a vehicle of expression as the novel. In a commercial cinema where costs are rising every year, financial responsibility is bound to weigh heavily on creative impulse. The wonder is that anyone, knowing the financial investment at stake, dares to take any chances at all.

Everyone seems to agree, in theory, that the cinema needs experiment, training grounds for young talent, the kind of boldness that comes only with freedom from commercial pressures. But our own cinema has produced no *Shadows*, no *Breathless*, no *Beau Serge*. A film like *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is cheaply made as far as the system allows; but it still cost £120,000 (three or four times the cost of these pictures), and it still had behind it the insurance of a best-selling novel.

What would happen, we wondered, if someone in this country was in a position to take the plunge: to raise, privately, the necessary thirty or forty thousand pounds and to spend this money making a film as he wanted to make it. He would be called mad, of course; and he would need enthusiasm and daring to a fanatical degree. What if he went ahead without concerning himself with a distribution guarantee, hoping to recoup his money not necessarily through a circuit release here but through art house distribution in Britain, America and Europe? What would happen to him; what sort of hazards might he expect to encounter? Is it true that the unions are not at present prepared to recognise any distinction between a production with a big studio behind it and one so backed? What are some of the problems of finance and distribution? What kind of market might a film made in this way hope to achieve?

We have asked people engaged in production, distribution and the provision of film finance to give us their comments on the cost of independence.

## ANTHONY PERRY and KENNETH CAVANDER

Producer (*The Secret Place*, *The Impersonator*) and writer (*The Impersonator*), members of Eyeline Films, an independent production company whose directors are Alfred Shaughnessy, Charles Frend, Guy Hamilton, Kenneth More and Anthony Perry.

WE ANSWER SIGHT AND SOUND'S QUESTIONS AS MEMBERS OF A group of professional film-makers. What we want to do and what has happened to us is bound to reflect the kind of people we are. In that sense what follows is a personal diary, not a diagnosis.

You ask: "What would happen to someone with £30,000 or £40,000 to spend and a film he wanted to make?" The short reply is—nothing. Provided he is competent enough not to go broke and provided the picture could be edited together, there is nothing to stop him making a film. And nothing (except shortage of customers) to stop him selling it. But the question contains some formidable assumptions, which raise most of the important issues about the independent production of films in this country today.

The first assumption is the word "someone". For an individual to make a film, in the sense that a novelist writes a novel, is impossible. A film is a communal effort of about 40 people, spread over some weeks or months. That effort is exacting, and often highly skilled in ways which have nothing to do with the vision of the writer or director. Nevertheless, without these skills, the vision perishes. The least a film can expect, then, is that everyone concerned is working efficiently and knowledgeably to the same end. The individual who arrives with £30,000 in one hand and a script in the other may find himself alone in a technician's world, more often told what can't be done than what might be achieved.

If money were to be available to make the kind of film we wanted to make, we had to be ready to make it without wasting time and effort on the things which normally inhibit the individual—the services of a production office and production manager, budgeting, scheduling, accountancy, facilities for testing artists. It was this reasoning that led us, early in 1960, to form an independent production company; in order to know the practical problems of film-making outside the big studios, as well as inside, and to be able to undertake any kind of production on a professional level. We rented offices in Dean Street. We set ourselves to create a working



Screen test: Eyeline Films test 16-year-old Claire Marshall for a leading part in their new production, a story about an adopted child to be directed by Charles Frend.



organism the make-up of which dictated itself, as did the kind of work we would have to do in order to exist. We had to become makers of sponsored films, either filmed advertising, documentaries, or features, so that we could spend what resources we had on developing the subjects and ideas we hoped to make entirely by ourselves.

At this point we come to the second of your assumptions, which is rather like Mrs. Beeton's juggled hare. The basic ingredient in the film-maker's recipe is money. But first raise your money.

Looking at the films that had begun to make a different approach to the cinema in this country possible, we saw that they were all tied to existing successes—either best-selling sensational novels and plays or known directors and actors, or both. Not one had been made from an original script. Not one had been made without stars. Not one had been made on a budget of less than, say, £75,000. Not one had been made outside an established studio. What hope was there for someone trying to make a film by unconventional methods (because these save money), from a script written entirely for the screen, with actors cast simply and solely for their rightness in the part, with a director who had never made his name? Without the security of a best-seller, or a star, or a director—there was no hope.

But there seemed to be a chink, a starting point. That was the second feature. At that time, early in 1960, there was a shortage of what Wardour Street significantly calls "product". Second features were made, cynically and crudely, merely as a way of filling up screen time on the circuits. We argued that distributors and, incidentally, the public, didn't seem to mind if second features were made with no standards of any kind; therefore they would presumably have no objection if those films tried to include a slightly wider range of subject matter: to deal, in fact, with events and people which were familiar from the newspapers, the theatre, and television and were barred only, it seemed, from the British cinema.

It was an argument that was eventually proved wrong. The reasons why are complex, but in trying to make them clear we hope that some things of relevance to this enquiry may emerge.

In this country the production money for a film is normally raised through a bank loan on a distributor's guarantee. We went to distributors with proposals for a programme of films, based on the standards outlined above, and pointed out that the supporting feature might, apart from anything else, be of use to the industry as a training ground, with considerably reduced risk, for the generation who had not established themselves. What we hoped for was encouragement in the shape of a clear statement of distributors' problems; a discussion of budgets, potential revenue, censor certificates, the type of script which would fit into their plans; not pre-production money, not a legal commitment, but a positive attitude to what we were trying to do. What we found was a preoccupation with the problems of the large first feature market, and no policy towards low-budget production, certainly not as a creative contribution to the industry. A.B.C.'s attitude was to regard such films as "studio fillers", to be slipped in when floor space was available; Rank were promoting no production on this scale at all; British Lion had a stock pile of films and were not reading scripts, though they later proved very open to a special proposition. Only Bryanston—themselves producers—understood the independent producer's isolation. In other words, the future did not exist. Some of the distributors felt that better things ought to be done with the same money. But here the alibi—a particularly timid one—was that you can't raise the standards on a three week schedule and a £15,000 budget—as if ideas, writing quality, casting, good actors, rehearsal, thorough preparation had nothing to do with it. Under the vague generalisation of "more quality means more time" they mask a refusal to face the real difficulties of creating a new standard in this type of filming.

The idea of consciously making films as part of a



*Commercial: a Dubonnet advertisement for TV, directed for Eyeline by Michael Powell. The screen test is filmed on the same set, re-vamped.*

programme, of booking features with each other to make up a satisfying evening, seemed to produce no response. The idea of making several films together, with all the consequent economies in studio and administrative costs, produced reactions, but no actions. On the scripts we sent them their comments were enthusiastic; but their immediate reflex was to suggest them as first features, on budgets of £75,000 or more. As for recovering their money on a non-circuit release through international art houses, they were not even informed about the figures. In most industries depending on public fancy the aim is to lead fashion. Only in the film industry are last year's models assumed to be better than next year's.

This is the principal answer to SIGHT AND SOUND's question—the raising of the money in terms other than the commercial market breaks down on the distributor/exhibitor axis. In giving a guarantee a distributor has to consider that he must sell his film to a circuit in order to recoup his money; and for practical financial purposes only two circuits exist, C.M.A. (Rank/National) and A.B.C. Thus two men, the booking managers of these circuits, virtually control the showing of all films not made as a matter of major company policy—all films, that is, covered by this enquiry—and, of course, all second features.

It was not surprising, then, that the first film we made was in some ways the least interesting of those we were proposing. But it had its uses. It proved that our machine was working. It allowed us to meet the N.F.F.C. accountants. It enabled us to establish a relationship with a distribution company which has allowed a second and more difficult film to be financed. It answered one of your questions for you. Union requirements are not the greatest inhibition to cheap film-making. The development of the industry genuinely dictates a minimum crew which is not all that smaller than the "regulation" minimum. But it must be said that certain practices make it difficult for a small company to keep costs down. We found that in location shooting in London our electricians were able to use union agreements to claim as much again in "overtime" as they were already being paid on daily rate—although they shot not a minute longer than an 8½-hour studio day. It would be encouraging to be allowed to negotiate special rates of pay with the higher-paid technicians who wanted to help out a



production in which the motives were not to enrich the producers; to be able, for instance, to use less than four men on the sound crew. But union practices are not the most unproductive item in the budget.

The following figures are extracts from the budget of one film we made, of which the total cost was around £21,000. Finance interest, the fee charged for the completion guarantee and legal charges totalled between them over £2,700. The bank put in a 60 guinea charge over and above its own expenses—apparently just for shaking hands. That is, over 10% of the budget went on financing financiers. In a different department, the fact that we spent one week out of the three working in a studio cost us over £6,000—that is simply the charges for rental, labour, use of stores, power, transport, etc. So almost 30 per cent of the budget was directly and solely attributable to one week's work in the studio: £6,000 which would not have been spent on shooting exactly the same material on location.

Out of all the above another answer to this enquiry becomes clear. The organisation of the industry forces costs to unrealistic levels in all departments. Nevertheless, the distributor/exhibitor axis can too easily be made out the unqualified villain of the piece. They are perhaps only villains by default, in that there is nothing more obvious—short of the society we live in—to blame. And yet the distributor may be seen as the victim, as much as the perpetuator, of that system.

There are other, more brutal reasons why no *Shadows*, no *Beau Serge*, has appeared in this country. One is the shortage of writers prepared to work in unorthodox ways and difficult conditions. Writing is in a seller's market. Not only good, but even barely competent writers, especially script writers, can make a comfortable living. Their energy can bring them quick and sure rewards, and they quite naturally prefer to see their work performed and paid for to gambling on an independent film production, an "uncommercial" subject, and a script which may never be shown. If they do work for films, the good writers can earn much more by doing re-write work on someone else's script or by knocking out an original Edgar Wallace second feature. A professional writer has no wish to invest a great deal of heart-breaking toil, time and ingenuity in a difficult medium, wrestling with problems he need never face in television or the theatre. Writing an original screenplay is a very long and arduous business—and it is no use pretending to a professional writer that any original script not aimed fair and square at the immediate market has as much chance of being filmed as, say, an adaptation of a long-running play. For a small company, working through deferred payments by which the bulk of a writer's money comes on the first day of shooting, the situation is desperate. We have had our scripts by devious means. One from a director who had established himself in documentaries; one from a writer who had bought himself time by selling another script to Hollywood; another from a writer who simply sacrificed himself; and so on . . . Only one came unannounced and totally written as a film script to our office—a first work by someone with no previous experience of films. This is another answer to the editor's question. In general no professional writer is writing the kind of film SIGHT AND SOUND would like to see with the necessary intensity, or conviction about the cinema as a medium.

One source of material we had hoped to find was among directors. We expected that directors who had hitherto been denied film expression by the rigid system would have scripts which they passionately wanted to make. Not books, not treatments which "might be good with a bit of re-writing", not a play they vaguely remembered from some rep company, but a script that could be budgeted, scheduled and shot. But here directors were like coy and reluctant maidens waiting to be wooed. They seemed relatively unwilling to embroil themselves in the problems of creating an original film script. And indeed, why should a man who can earn £100 for a day's work on a commercial, or work as he pleases in a TV company

without the tribulations of film politics, give up weeks of his time to something that may never be made, and even if it is may cost him every worry and disaster imaginable? We have no answer—except to say that everything worthwhile costs something. You can't blame such people: if they have reached a position they want the plums; if they haven't they can't afford to be distracted from the business of earning a living. But their attitude does supply another answer to the questions raised.

We ourselves were wrong to pin our hopes on a type of production which relied *solely* on the chance of being acceptable to the industry as it stood. There are many good reasons why an independent production company should try to keep on working inside the system. It is part of being independent that you should reserve the right, as we do, to move in either world as you like. By the very fact that we undertake sponsored work, we are part of the system. But at the same time we are in a better position to work outside it if the opportunity should arise—better, at any rate, than anyone who has resolutely rejected it from the start. With the lessons we have learnt and our technical facilities, there is little excuse for us now if we do not try to do something on our own account. What market such a film might achieve must remain a theoretical question until such a film has been made, made well, and successfully distributed. Perhaps one way of marketing it might be to take it round from one independent exhibitor to another, though without the backing of a large publicity campaign such do-it-yourself distribution seems unlikely to succeed. The publicity is more likely to come from the critical press and the foreign film festivals. But this means that the film must stand up to international competition. No wonder the prospect daunts. The true answer to this whole enquiry lies in the people who go to make up the British film industry, their backgrounds, their training, the society they reflect. No one person or section is responsible for the present state of affairs. But each individual film-maker who has ever been too tired, too discouraged, too cynical, too easy-going, too parsimonious, too world-weary to insist on what he knows to be the best must take some of the guilt on himself. If you have a film you love and want to make, you lose a part of yourself if you don't make it. Somehow.

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## TONY RICHARDSON

Stage and screen producer and director. Directed *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer*; produced *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

TOO BUSY TO LET US HAVE ANYTHING IN WRITING, TONY Richardson managed to make time, between takes during one of the last days of shooting on *A Taste of Honey*, to give us his comments.

*A Taste of Honey* itself is being financed in an "orthodox" way: there is a distribution guarantee (through Bryanston) and the money comes from industry sources. The unusual thing is that no filming whatsoever has taken place in a studio; the film has been shot on location in Manchester and Salford, in a Chelsea house taken over as combined studio and offices, and elsewhere in London. It will cost about £120,000, which Tony Richardson regards as excessive. But £30,000 of this (or roughly the cost of a film like *Shadows* or *Les Quatre Cents Coups*) has gone on two non-productive but in this case essential and irreducible items: the expense of acquiring the property itself, and the hotel bills while the company was on location. A year ago, Tony Richardson tried to set the production up as he wanted it—that is, a cast without big names and a non-studio schedule. He failed then, though he believes he might have succeeded if he could have gone on longer. Now he has managed it without notable difficulty. Would it have been the same if the subject had not been a hit play?



"Probably," he says, "at the moment"—the proviso having to do with the mood of industry backers at any given time. In contradiction to some of the stories one hears, he has nothing but appreciation for the way labour questions have been handled. The unions have been fully co-operative and the unit has had to carry no passengers, in the sense of technicians demanded by regulations but not strictly essential to the production. The unit itself has been hand-picked; and has been prepared, on occasion, to go through a fourteen-hour working day with only a short meal break.

Tony Richardson's view is that the situation generally has never been more favourable to the independent film-maker. Why, then, do the really adventurous independent productions remain so few? Because, he holds, the impetus and drive simply aren't there among enough film-makers. "The really creative talent has been drained off into the theatre. People in this country haven't got the cinema in their blood." Is it, one asks, that conditions in the theatre are known—or at least are thought—to be more encouraging? Mr. Richardson argues that great talent creates its own conditions, as evidenced for instance by the way Satyajit Ray managed to make *Pather Panchali*.

The gap between a production such as his own and a £30,000 venture is still wide. He believes good films could be made for £30,000, but conditionally. Either the subject should be of a kind which can be fitted without damage into the tight schedule and corner-cutting methods of second feature production; or the film should be made on a semi-amateur basis. It is not, he feels, the conditions that should concern us so much as the shortage of the right talent, the right enthusiasm.

## BRYAN FORBES

**Screenwriter and actor. Wrote *The Angry Silence*, *The League of Gentlemen*; has just directed his first feature, *Whistle Down the Wind*.**

OF COURSE WE ALL DREAM OF STUMBLING ACROSS THE ODD tame millionaire, or even a culture-hungry scrap merchant, with the odd thirty or forty thousand to spare . . . but failing the appearance of such a mentor, I feel that the only hope for the young (?) talent in this country is to try and adapt the existing financial structure of film production to its own ends. It can be done, to an extent. Richard Attenborough and I managed to produce *The Angry Silence* for £99,000. It didn't prove to be the box-office smash of all time, but neither did it lay an egg—the backers got their money back and will show a respectable profit for their investment. This paved the way, because this was a film turned down by all the major distribution outlets (it was pre-Bryanston and Allied Film Makers). What it meant to us personally was that we had to work for nothing—literally no cash at all (though in return we retained the major share of the profits). We have no complaint about this: we wanted to make the film and one must be prepared to stand by one's own convictions, if one wants *final control*. We had control—control over the script, casting, cutting, music and so forth, and were consulted over the advertising. We were not subjected to outside pressures, either during the filming or afterwards.

Of course the existing structure could be improved. Certain union policies are short-sighted—there should be provisions made for the small-budget film which could be made on location without the travelling circus and top-heavy "minimum crew" stipulation. I don't believe this would lead to abuse by producers, or unemployment within the industry.

I realise some of the fears behind the unions' reasoning: past injustices still rankle and the individual member remembers hard times and money squandered on bad films. But few producers are allowed the luxury of an unlimited budget today. (I am talking about the home-grown producer who has



The "Taste of Honey" unit filming exteriors at the English Stage Company's workshop off the Fulham Road, Photograph by Thomas Picton.

to go cap in hand for his end money and completion guarantees.) I firmly believe that British technicians are second to none and I have always found that they respond to enthusiasm with enthusiasm. Too often the fault lies in the production office itself—the climate of enthusiasm generates from there. Admittedly certain restrictive practices border on lunacy and bear no relation to the job in hand. Most sensible technicians will privately agree with this, but seem unable to persuade their unions to get the obvious absurdities removed.

Film-making can never be easy: the medium itself grows more complex every day; audiences are getting wiser; the financial investment for even the most modest undertaking is still enormous by normal standards. Enthusiasm by itself is not enough—a degree of professionalism is not to be despised. We need an influx of new blood, and to this end I think many of the barriers could be lowered, but the new talent shouldn't imagine that the creative impulse alone will carry them forward to success (or even a good review in SIGHT AND SOUND). I have been bored in the National Film Theatre and vastly



entertained in the local Odeon. It is possible to make films unfettered, to realise personal ambitions and visions without compromise, and at the same time reach a mass audience and entertain. This, I feel, is what we should all strive for, and the sooner the better.

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## CARL FOREMAN

**Producer and screenwriter; most recently of *The Guns of Navarone*.**

BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE enquiry, I may as well put myself peevishly on the record and say that in my opinion most of the so-called "new wave" films are greatly overrated, meretricious in treatment, and ignoble in purpose, and are successful, in the main, only because of the gullibility that goes with the general mood of cynicism and despair in the white West. I haven't yet seen *The Connection*, so I can't comment on the screen adaptation of this curious piece of dramaturgy. But I have seen *Shadows*, which is overrated, too, a hoax which has been swallowed whole by people who should know better. That is to say, it is perfectly obvious that *Shadows* is not an "improvisation," but a lucky little picture in which bad actors read bad lines from a bad script, in a film so bad that it should be obvious to anyone who knows films at all that the thing has been cut and recut and completely re-edited from start to finish, in ways that the authors of the script never intended or expected. But they've gotten away with it, and more power to them.

Having thus given an exhibition of crotchety middle-aged spleen, I should now like to say that it would be a fine thing if we had some such films in Britain. We need new film-makers desperately, and we need films about the contemporary scene, even if the reflection in the mirror is sometimes a distorted one.

Will we get them? Probably not, for all the reasons stated in the enquiry. Production costs are too high, the unions are concerned only with working conditions, the archaic and monopolistic British distribution system wants only what it considers safe, and the national film subsidy pays a premium only on *proved* success.

Why, then, the success of the "new wave" in France? Because production costs are much cheaper there, and because the French film subsidy guarantees the producer or financier that, at worst, he will get almost all his investment back. Given these two factors, it isn't too difficult to find someone with money who wants to take a fairly well-insured fling in the cinema, particularly when the subject matter of the film, assuming it deals with sex, violence or perversion, is highly commercial. Lastly, in France, if one distributor won't take a film, there are a dozen others who are hungry for something to sell.

What we need in Britain (in my opinion) is a film school like the one in Poland, and a nationalised distribution circuit which will guarantee fair playing time and fair terms to producers who want to take advantage of such a circuit. Failing these, what is needed is a subsidy that will *not* reward already commercially successful films with a bonus, but rather will protect and foster worthy films by film-makers who are not content to play it safe.

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## JOHN TERRY

**Managing director of the National Film Finance Corporation.**

IN AN ARTICLE IN THE SPRING ISSUE OF SIGHT AND SOUND surprise was expressed that the National Film Finance Corporation had provided the entire cash cost of production for Arnold Wesker's *The Kitchen*. N.F.F.C., however, was

pleased to support a project which comprised a highly original subject; an absorbing and exciting script; a cast strong in ability if not in stardom; the promise of brilliant direction from a newcomer to feature films; a readiness on the part of author, producer and director to rely largely on profits; and careful and economic budgeting and cost control. These ingredients seemed to us to justify, without any abnormal risk, a departure from the normal pattern of finance in order to make possible this unusual venture in the contemporary British cinema.

It is often implied that anything worthwhile in terms of the creative art of film-making must necessarily be uncommercial and therefore repugnant to the trade establishment—by which in this context I mean the main providers of production finance, i.e. the major distributors and N.F.F.C. Whilst there may well be difficulties in persuading exhibitors to book experimental or unusual pictures, the establishment in fact gives substantial support to new people and challenging subjects—as, for instance, in the recent cases of *Room at the Top*, *The Entertainer* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

The introduction to this enquiry suggests that the establishment is interested in financing only "commercial subjects"—a phrase which I take to be meant as a term of abuse—and never extends its helping hand to the "people who are prepared to approach the cinema in a different way—who have, that is, a passionate and desperate concern." But where is this host of disappointed film-makers whose creative impulses are thus thwarted? To the extent to which they exist, let them come forward and present their projects; and, so long as these are well thought out and carefully prepared, I do not believe they will meet with such a frigid reception as they seem to expect. Surely few people could have a more "passionate and desperate concern" than the makers of *The Angry Silence*, which was produced with the full and enthusiastic support of the establishment.

Rising costs are a limiting factor, but much could be done to curtail them if there were a "passionate and desperate concern" to do so on the part of those receiving excessive fees or carrying on restrictive practices. However, film-making is an expensive business and cannot be conducted in a garret with a few canvases, brushes and paints. Thus the film producer is almost invariably subject to commercial or at least moral pressures, whether his finance derives from the establishment or from his favourite aunt. Freedom from such pressures is not essential to art; and some of the most banal and worthless of films have emerged from the availability of limitless finance.

What is certain is that there is always room at the top for real ability. What is uncertain is the amount of unrecognised talent on its way up.

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## DAVID KINGSLEY

**Managing director of British Lion; formerly managing director of the National Film Finance Corporation.**

YOUR INTRODUCTION RAISES SOME VERY INTERESTING POINTS, but it appears that you are under some misapprehension if you assume that the distribution side of our industry is not ready to handle and encourage the production of films of an experimental nature. Most distributors are only too ready to handle any such films that can be sold even on a limited commercial basis, even if they are not suitable for wide distribution in this country through the major circuits. My company—British Lion—jumped at the opportunity to undertake the distribution of *Shadows*, for which we gave a substantial guarantee, and we would be happy to take further films of that calibre if we were offered them.

The real problem is financing these experimental films. Finance for film production is traditionally associated with distribution, but there is no reason why it should be. For every



experimental film completed there are bound to be a large number of "unsuccessful" films from a distribution point of view, but it is not true to say that any directors have not attempted this in England. We have been offered a number of films of an experimental nature, which have been made by young producers and directors, using their own money and on low budgets. Unfortunately, in our opinion, none of them has been good enough to justify exhibition at the ordinary commercial cinema, in which people are asked to pay and expect entertainment in return. It would, of course, be unfair to name these films, but attempts have certainly been made. As you most truly say, "Independence, enthusiasm and devotion are no guarantee of quality."

I wonder if the directors and producers of experimental films could use the same imagination and ingenuity in obtaining the necessary finance as they do to make their films. For example, why not try well known patrons of the arts and big industrial concerns outside the film industry? It is well known that industry sponsors films for prestige and public relations purposes.

While, probably, "thirty or forty thousand pounds" would be an extravagant budget even for a successful experimental film, if this amount could be considerably pruned I think the money could be recouped through art house distribution throughout the world. Hazards might be encountered, but surely this would be part of the experiment.

I believe, therefore, that the production of such films must continue to be financed privately. If successful, the producer will find no difficulty in securing distribution. Distributors such as British Lion are continually endeavouring to achieve wider and wider exhibition for films outside the general conception of popular entertainment.

## CHARLES COOPER

Managing director of Contemporary Films.

IN A DISCUSSION I HAD RECENTLY WITH JOHN ARDAGH FROM *The Observer*, I explained to him the need for an additional 100 cinemas throughout the country to take care of the public need to present the "cream" of films from all countries now producing. I firmly believe that there is sufficient support in this country and, were these cinemas currently available, they could run on a sound commercial basis. We need a comfortable type of cinema with approximately 500 seats, showing single feature films and two or three short subjects. In some areas programmes could be arranged on an advanced booking basis. This type of cinema would not only be an outlet for the "cream" of foreign product but also for low budget independently produced British features. Furthermore, by being an outlet for British documentaries, it would provide a necessary training ground for feature film directors of the future. I believe that the establishment of a circuit of "art cinemas" must eventually come about, sponsored either from public or private sources.

Were these cinemas now available, I feel sure that the problems raised in your enquiry would not exist, as the cost of production of good independent features of approximately £30,000 would be recovered from the domestic release. However, at present these additional "art cinemas" do not exist and the problems are still with us.

What, then, are the possibilities for independent production at present in the United Kingdom? The money required can probably be raised from private sources or on a co-operative basis, and I believe the situation is improving all the time. However, it must be made clear at this stage that only part of the investment is likely to be recovered from United Kingdom distribution and the balance, plus a profit, must be obtained from overseas sales.

Foreign films such as *The Savage Eye*, *Wild Strawberries*,



Bryan Forbes rehearses with Hayley Mills, who has a leading part in his first feature, "Whistle Down the Wind".

*Shadows*, will bring back to their producers upward of £15,000 from the British market alone. These are not British films and we might hope that British films could do better. In regard to sales abroad, here, of course, much more depends on the quality of the film and its suitability for overseas audiences. If the film is to be sold abroad, it must truly reflect life in this country—and not be puerile; something that can be shown at a major festival without embarrassment. The major film festivals are becoming more and more valuable as a market for overseas sales.

What are the possible financial returns for the producer? He could expect, say, £15,000 from limited United Kingdom release and substantially more than this if a circuit release is obtained; £10,000 from the U.S.A., £5,000 from Western Europe; if sales are made to the U.S.S.R. and other Eastern European territories, this could bring about £12,000, and to this we may add £2,000 from other areas. We then have the Eady Fund payments in the United Kingdom and possible television exploitation at a later date. These figures can obviously be much higher or much lower—they will depend largely on the quality of the films.

It is interesting to note that releases in the United Kingdom appear to set the pace for later releases in other territories. The producers of *The Savage Eye*, *Shadows*, *Come Back*, *Africa*, opened their films first of all in the United Kingdom before releasing them in the U.S.A. and other countries.

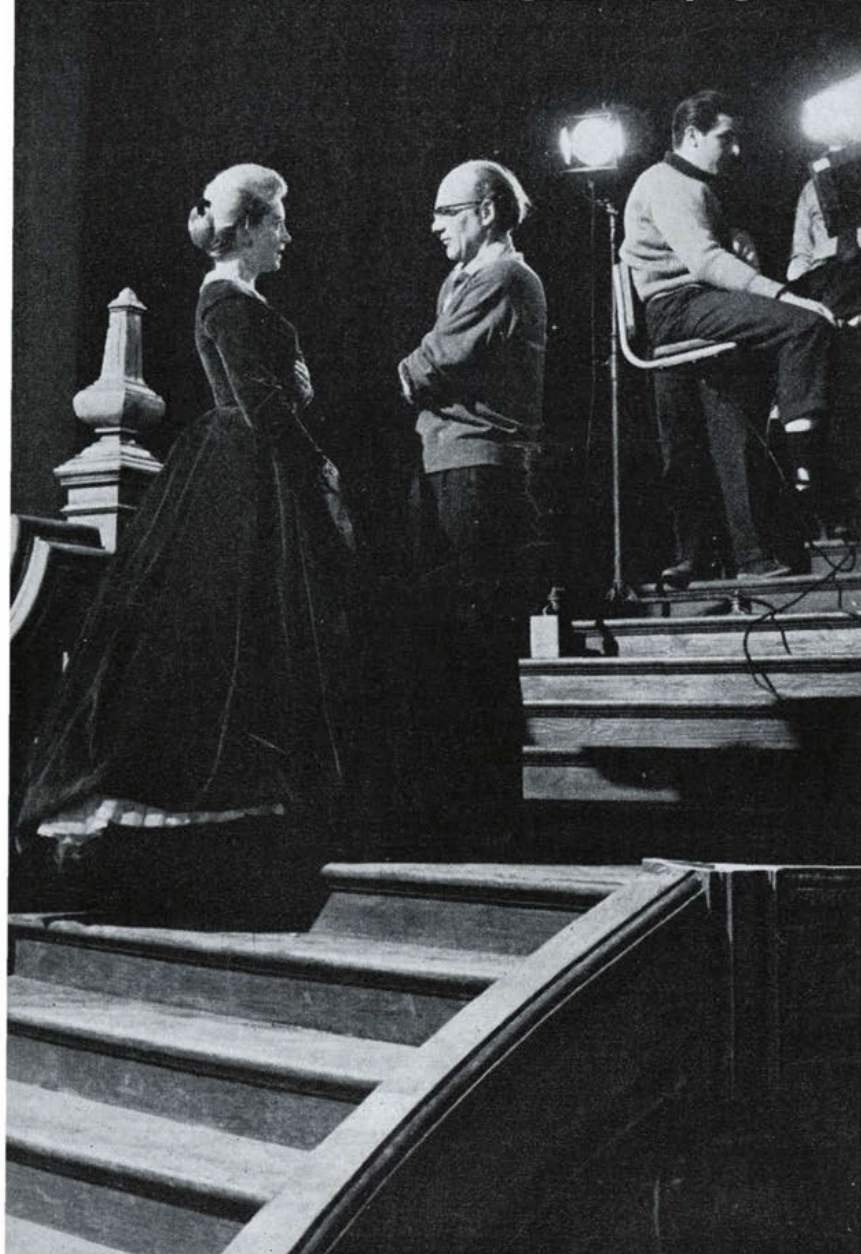
The situation now is by no means hopeless and an able independent producer who can finance his production has a fair chance of success.

As distributors we welcome this enquiry into the possibilities of independent production. We find today a growing body of distributors throughout the world who are looking for mature films of high quality and know what to do with them when they arrive.



# THE INNOCENTS

"The Innocents": Deborah Kerr and Jack Clayton.



by PENELOPE HOUSTON

THE SILENT STAGE at Shepperton is so-called for the adequate, if backhanded, reason that it's so noisy it is impossible to shoot sound there. Up in the roof the birds seem more or less to have taken possession. At ground level, dotted across the 200-foot stage, sections of the exterior set of *The Innocents* are spread out against backcloths of mournful, mist-shadowed parkland. An ivy-covered doorway opens into a topless tower; two-thirds of the frontage of Bly House, bleak and lop-sided, survives the removal of a missing section which has gone to form part of a composite set somewhere else; in haphazard proximity, and still at ground level, a crenellated chunk of masonry indicates a turret top—it is against these battlements, presumably, that the governess gets that first disquieting glimpse of Peter Quint. Away to the right of the stage is the exterior set proper: a sloping wilderness of shrubs and trees, the rhododendrons presumably authentic, the acid-

green ferns certainly not. A weeping willow trails its paper leaves; its trunk dangles, in melancholy reminder of its artificiality, four feet or so clear of the ground.

One is inclined to be a little derisive of these elaborate studio reconstructions, especially when they involve sticking 3,000 (I think) paper leaves on to a hand-made willow. The reasons, though, are logical enough: not so much, as had been reported, the impossibility of finding a suitable house, but the problem of shooting a film requiring seasonal change against bare branches, and the difficulty of planning any schedule involving location shooting in an English spring. How much, one wonders, has our seasoned pride in the unpredictability of English weather to do with our studios' notorious reluctance to move out-of-doors?

*The Innocents*, though, is an interior drama in every sense of the word. It is Jack Clayton's first film since *Room at the Top*; and his choice of subject—Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, via the stage adaptation by William Archibald—should be surprising only to those who read more into Clayton's first feature, regarding it as part of a movement leading towards *Look Back in Anger* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, than the director himself would have claimed for it. Talking to Jack Clayton soon after the release of *Room at the Top*, it was obvious that he didn't want to see his film annexed to any critical group: if we called it a breakthrough for realism, we were doing so at our own risk. His decision to film *The Turn of the Screw*, that least tangible of ghost stories, is an indication not only of an eclectic taste but of an attitude towards film-making. Clayton is not the kind of director for whom the choice of subject is itself part of the creative process. Rather, he picks the subject because it sparks a creative response. A response to what? He would tell us to wait for the film. But one might speculate, with every chance of misinterpreting a director so resistant to being pinned down, that part of the attraction here lay in the difficulty.

A film about "two ghosts, two irritating children, a house-keeper and a governess": the box-office prospects, he easily admits, are not quite in the *Room at the Top* class. And this adaptation, on which Truman Capote, John Mortimer and William Archibald have all worked, promises to keep the story poised on the razor edge where Henry James left it. James's own comment on his novel was explicit and a little chilling: "A piece of ingenuity pure and simple, of cold, artistic calculation, an *amulette* to catch those not easily caught . . . the jaded, the disillusioned, the fastidious." The anecdote itself, of the corrupted children and the prowling servile spirits, was passed on to him, he recorded in his *Notebooks*, by an Archbishop of Canterbury. The governess was the character he needed to give him a central point of view, a critical awareness; but he deliberately chose "to rule out subjective complications of her own, to keep her impersonal save for the most obvious and indispensable little note of neatness, firmness and courage."

Haring down the Freudian trail, interpreters have found the governess responsible for everything. Peter Quint, "beautiful but obscene", and the poor harried Miss Jessel (to whom, I'm pleased to find, Clayton is prepared to extend rather more sympathy than did James) dwindle as spectres to reappear as neurotic symptoms. But the film is not going to be a Freudian *Turn of the Screw*. Deborah Kerr, who plays the part, insists with Clayton's full agreement on the element of sustained uncertainty: she believes the audience should never be quite sure. She appears in literally every scene; and she will be allowed no help from any of the devices of subjective narration, since Clayton regards their use as equivalent to an admission of defeat by the film-maker.

The dialogue itself, Clayton says, will give us "more of James than you might expect." Its tone will of necessity be heightened, a little more high-pitched than life, to an extent



which the director says he sometimes finds rather unnerving. But the story resists the prosaic. It must communicate its theme not through what happens—for what, after all, does happen?—but through intimations of the extraordinary.

On the day we visited Shepperton, the scenes being worked on were both between governess and housekeeper. In the first, Mrs. Grose (Megs Jenkins) is told by the governess that she is to take Flora to her uncle in London, while Miss Giddens stays at Bly to make her last bid to protect Miles. The take, in the stuffy little bedroom set, ran for the best part of two minutes. At first, Deborah Kerr in close-up, with Megs Jenkins across the room in moderately deep focus; then a track back by the camera, to hold the close-up; then a shifting of position by the actresses, to bring Megs Jenkins up to the camera and Deborah Kerr to the door at the back of the set. Rock-steady, Megs Jenkins hardly varied a movement or an intonation. But the scene was Deborah Kerr's; and the fining down and edging of it, through a series of murmured conversations between actress and director, became a precision operation. By the ninth take, suddenly and unmistakably, the tone was right.

The second scene, coming much earlier in the story, was that in which Miss Giddens shows the housekeeper the letter with the news that Miles has been expelled from school. "Are you afraid he'll corrupt *you*?" Mrs. Grose asks, while the governess surrenders briefly to "the apprehension of ridicule." The setting here was the conservatory, and as the actresses rehearsed, clutching their scripts and in their ordinary clothes, one wondered how their heavy crinolines, as well as the camera pursuing them on its dolly, were going to negotiate a kind of steeplechase course of potted plants.

These patterns of camera movement, and the combination of close-ups and unusual depth of focus, are in part Jack Clayton's answer to CinemaScope, in which the film is being shot and which he happens to dislike. Freddie Francis, the cameraman and a recent Oscar winner for *Sons and Lovers*, and Deborah Kerr both commented on the ferocious heat of the lights needed for some of these effects. The close-ups,



Above: Jack Clayton rehearses with Pamela Franklin (Flora). Below: Deborah Kerr and Martin Stephens.

Deborah Kerr said, brought the camera so nearly on top of her that she felt herself going cross-eyed as she and it confronted each other at a distance of inches. Another technical effect, worked out by Clayton and his editor, Jim Clark, will be the use of dissolves burning out into white instead of fading into the usual black.

From all this, the impression is of a calculated visual finesse. *The Innocents*, one can safely say, is going to have style. But Jack Clayton is not more obviously a Jamesian director than he is a film-maker wholly sympathetic to John Braine's rougher prose. He is too wary of the pretentious to commit himself to general statements; and too shrewd to be drawn, for instance, even into an unqualified statement of liking for the subjects he chooses to film. *The Turn of the Screw* is something he has wanted to do for a long time: it is for the audience to take it from there.





THE CANNES FESTIVAL OF 1959 took place under the sign of the French cinema and of the movement that everyone was beginning to call the *nouvelle vague*. Grouped together, and praised equally, were Marcel Camus's *Orfeu Negro*, François Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups* and Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour*. Since then, the enthusiasm with which French audiences and critics greeted this new trend in cinema has become progressively subject to the law of diminishing returns. Although several films by young directors were put forward for the French selection at Cannes, 1961 (and *Une aussi longue absence*, the first feature by the film editor Henri Colpi, was finally chosen as an official entry and shared the Festival Grand Prix), the excitement of 1959 was missing. In two years, the situation of the French cinema has been radically transformed.

Early in 1961 *Le Film Français*, the weekly trade paper which regularly publishes production and distribution statistics for French films, printed a detailed table which seems worth reproducing here. Under the heading: "67 directors have undertaken their first feature films in 1959 and 1960," the

magazine published a check list of the new film-makers. (See box on next page.)

Sixty-seven directors for 65 films, two, *La Récréation* and *La Peau et les Os*, having been made in collaboration. If we add to this the features made by newcomers during 1958, and some second or third films which have followed these initial ventures, we can conclude that during three years about a hundred films have been made by directors who have entered upon their profession in this period. Nothing like this has ever been recorded before in the French cinema. Confronted with such figures, one can easily understand how the whole *nouvelle vague* legend has grown up.

### *The original nucleus*

IN FACT, THE NUCLEUS essentially consisted of the critical team of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, who in their writings had defined and energetically sustained a "politique des auteurs". Let us name Claude Chabrol, François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer and Pierre Kast. Add the names of Alexandre Astruc, Jean-Pierre Melville, Agnès Varda, Roger Vadim and Louis Malle, who can be regarded as the forerunners; and those of Claude-Bernard Aubert, Jacques Baratier, Michel Drach, Marcel Hanoun, Chris Marker, Jean-Daniel Pollet and Jean Rouch, who have all worked—as at the outset did the directors from the *Cahiers* group—in conditions which are not those of traditional French production. We now have 19 names, relatively few of them figuring in the above list for 1959, which can be grouped together under one heading. Franju, like Camus, should be listed among those directors who have followed standard methods of production; and the case of Alain Resnais is a very special one.

The French cinema has changed its entire aspect since 1958, and there has been a minor revolution in techniques of

JACQUES SICLIER

## NEW WAVE

## AND FRENCH CINEMA

Below: Astruc's "La Proie pour l'Ombre".





production and shooting. The *nouvelle vague* directors wanted to prove that one could make salable films without expensive stars, through reduced shooting schedules, the use of natural locations, day and night shooting out in the streets, and the employment of small units. They also wanted to ensure that the characters in their films were living people, not the unchanging, stereotyped marionettes of the so-called "quality" productions with their impeccable dramatic construction. They wanted to show their own generation's ways of living and thinking; to tackle issues not previously raised in the French cinema. Coming fifteen years later, the attempt in itself was comparable to that of the Italian neo-realists—as *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, for instance, illustrates. The development of television, too, had made its impact. A certain kind of reportage and "direct" cinema (shooting with a hand-held camera; an acting style closer to the interview than the theatre) came into fashion along with the *nouvelle vague*. In 1950 or so, such experiments would only have been practicable in the 16mm. amateur field, while to become a feature director one had first to have served as an assistant. The cinema profession had since 1945 been one of the most strictly subject to rules

and regimentation. (It is only lately, with the coming into effect of a new system of state support, that this situation has begun to change.) No film producer would have dared to put his trust in Truffaut, Chabrol or their contemporaries unless they had themselves provided proof that their theories were well-founded.

Another contribution from this original nucleus, and more particularly from Roger Vadim and Louis Malle, was a new kind of moral outlook, or rather an "anti-morality", arrived at through a peremptory statement of the relativity of traditional social and religious attitudes to questions of sexual freedom. Before Vadim and *Et Dieu Créa la Femme*, no one had shown us a woman character quite as contemporary (and also as real) as Brigitte Bardot. The French cinema had stopped short with the "sentimental *bourgeoise*", the sort of woman represented over the years, with considerable talent, by an actress like Danielle Darrieux. Now Brigitte Bardot, and later Jeanne Moreau, came to be treated less as actresses than as symbols. They raised the standard of the new amorality, which in turn was an effort to deal with relations between men and women as they actually are.

There are two other factors worth noting. The young French directors have never claimed to constitute a "school", despite the ideas and theories they hold in common. Their works are all individually conceived, and only the fact that the *Cahiers du Cinéma* team has formed a kind of unit, held together by friendship, to break through the barriers of official French production, has made it possible to believe in the existence of an organised movement. Young film-makers from Hungary, Poland and Italy, who took part along with the French in round table discussions at Venice in 1959, were thoroughly disappointed to find that the *nouvelle vague* was not going to produce the sort of ideological manifesto they had hoped for. A further point is that one can no longer talk of totally independent production. Truffaut, Chabrol and Rivette made their first films largely with their own money; but, in consequence, young film-makers can now work through the normal channels, having secured those guarantees of freedom of expression which they demanded.

The *Cahiers du Cinéma* group managed to break through the professional system, so easing the way for a number of beginners who would otherwise have had to wait years before getting the chance to prove themselves. Among the 67 directors listed by *Le Film Français*, one can name:

- 17 short film directors
- 14 assistants
- 8 from television and radio
- 6 actors
- 6 producers or production directors
- 5 writers (among them Jean Giono)
- 3 journalists (Rohmer, Godard, Doniol-Valcroze)
- 2 film editors
- 2 screenwriters
- 1 documentarist
- 1 film exporter
- 1 student
- 1 lawyer

The assistants, that is to say those with traditional professional qualifications, account for only 20 per cent. The largest group (25 per cent.) is made up of directors of short films. And this is not surprising: since 1954, France's short film production has been a forcing-house for talent. Franju and Resnais have of course come out of it; but until recently it was far from easy to make the move from short to feature work. Short film production constituted the test-bench; an assistant directorship demonstrated a professional qualification. And 55 per cent. of the new directors have other backgrounds.

All this helps to explain why the idea has got around that anyone can now make a film in France. This is only partly true. What is true is that everyone now *wants* to make films, just as in 1945 everyone wanted to write novels or poems. The cinema has become the preferred means of expression for

## 1959

ARMAND, Pierre  
CALDERON, Gérard  
DARD, Frédéric  
DRACH, Michel  
DUDRUMET, Jean-Charles  
GAISSEAU, Pierre-Dominique  
GIR, François  
GODARD, Jean-Luc  
GROSPIERRE, Louis  
HANOUN, Marcel  
KERCHNER, Jean  
MENEGOU, Robert  
MOCKY, Jean-Pierre  
NAHUM, Jacques  
OURY, Gérard  
PAVIOT, Paul  
PECAS, Max  
POLLET, Jean-Daniel  
ROHMER, Eric  
ST MAURICE, Christian de  
SAUTET, Claude  
VALCROZE, Jacques Doniol  
VALERE, Jean  
VILLA, Jacques R.

*Les Piqués*  
*Le grand secret*  
*Une gueule comme la mienne*  
*On n'enterre pas le dimanche*  
*La corde raide*  
*Le ciel et la boue*  
*Mon pote le gitan*  
*A bout de souffle*  
*Le travail, c'est la liberté*  
*Le huitième jour*  
*La dragée haute*  
*La millième fenêtre*  
*Les dragueurs*  
*Le Saint mène la danse*  
*La main chaude*  
*Pantalaskas*  
*Le cercle vicieux*  
*La ligne de mire*  
*Le signe du lion*  
*Suspense au deuxième bureau*  
*Classe tous risques*  
*L'eau à la bouche*  
*La sentence*  
*Les petits chats*

## 1960

AGABRA, Edmond  
ALBICOCCO, Gabriel  
ANDREI, Yannick  
BERTHIER, Jacques  
CLEMENT, Michel  
COLLIN, Fabien  
COLPI, Henri  
CORNUT, Jacques-Gérard  
DANINOS, Jean-Daniel  
DEMY, Jacques  
DERAY, Jacques  
DESREUMAUX, André  
DEWEVER, Jean  
DUCREST, Philippe  
FABIANI, Henri  
FERMAUD, Michel  
FOG, Dany  
FRIEDMANN, Serge  
GATTI, Armand  
GAUTHERIN, Pierre  
GIONO, Jean  
GIRAULT, Jean  
GOBBI, Sergio  
GRIMBLAT, Pierre  
IVERNEL, Vicky  
KALIFA, Max  
KERCHBRON, Jean  
LAMOUREUX, Robert  
LELOUCH, Claude  
LITERRIER, François  
LISBONA, Joseph  
MAGNIER, Claude  
MOREUIL, François  
MOUSSY, Marcel  
PANIGEL, Jacques  
POITRENAUD, Jacques  
ROZIER, Jacques  
SALTEL, Roger  
SASSY, Jean-Paul  
SECHAN, Edmond  
SOULANES, Louis  
VIERNE, Jean-Jacques  
ZAPHIRATOS, Henri

*Caravane pour Zagora*  
*La fille aux yeux d'or*  
*Samedi soir*  
*Le temps d'un reflet*  
*Le bal des espions*  
*La récréation*  
*Une aussi longue absence*  
*L'homme à femmes*  
*Un Martien à Paris*  
*Lola*  
*Le gigolo*  
*La gorge sèche*  
*Les honneurs de la guerre*  
*La croix et la bannière*  
*Le bonheur est pour demain*  
*Les portes claquent*  
*La mort a les yeux bleus*  
*Les magiciennes*  
*L'enclos*  
*Au cœur de la ville*  
*Crésus*  
*Les pique-assiettes*  
*L'espace d'un matin*  
*Me faire ça à moi*  
*La pendule à Salomon*  
*L'engrenage*  
*Vacances en enfer*  
*La brune que voilà*  
*Le propre de l'homme*  
*Les mauvais coups*  
*Le panier à crabes*  
*Réveille-toi, chérie*  
*La récréation*  
*St Tropez Blues*  
*La peau et les os*  
*Les amours de Paris*  
*Adieu, Philippine*  
*Jugez-les biens*  
*La peau et les os*  
*L'OURS*  
*Les filles sèment le vent*  
*La fête espagnole*  
*Les nymphettes*





Bernadette Lafont and Jean-Claude Brialy in Chabrol's "Les Godelureaux".

those tagged by Georges Sadoul as "the 1960 generation"; and, at any rate during the last two years, this generation has been able to find favourable conditions in the film industry. In fact it should be noted that of the 67 directors, only four (Michel Drach, Jean-Daniel Pollet, Eric Rohmer and Claude Lelouch) have made "fringe" productions. The others have been working in more or less standard conditions.

Writing, however, just about the time of the 1961 Cannes Festival, the second anniversary of the official and international triumph of the young French cinema, there is a further point worth making. About thirty features made by newcomers between 1959 and the beginning of 1961 have yet to find distribution through the regular channels.

## Public Reaction

THIS MIGHT BE ATTRIBUTED to the difficulty of absorbing such a contingent of films into the distribution system. The figures for annual production, including co-productions, continue to rise: 124 features in 1958; 137 in 1959, 165 in 1960. The top figure reached previously, before the *nouvelle vague*, was 1957's exceptional total of 141 films. But for the last two years French films, with the exception of "quality" productions such as *Plein Soleil* or "prestige" pictures like *La Vérité* and *La Princesse de Clèves*, have been getting shorter runs in the chief Paris cinemas. Another important factor has come up: the mounting public dissatisfaction with the work of the young film-makers, an attitude which has in turn led to caution among exploiters and distributors. There was a *nouvelle vague* fashion, and now it's at an end.

This change of mood is partly explained by the over-literary or intellectual calibre of some films, such as *Hiroshima mon Amour* or *Le Bel Age*. But there is also a reaction against the

scandalous or exhibitionist aspect of so many productions. Louis Malle's *Les Amants* had the appeal of novelty—or pseudo-novelty, since its level was really that of *Extase*, that bogus erotic masterpiece of the Thirties. Since then, the public has grown bored with watching endless stories about students, artists, professional men, people essentially of the cinema, preoccupied solely with questions of sex, shades of libertinage or the philosophy of love. All French films are beginning to look alike; and the directors, whose world is so restricted and who only really know and talk about the intellectual circles of Paris, must take their full share of the responsibility. The face of modern youth as represented in these films (notably those of Chabrol), the perpetual to-and-fro of bored and restless couples, no longer excites the public. And the producers, who have tried to keep only what seemed to them commercial out of the new ideas, who have asked young directors to make *nouvelle vague* films on the cheap in order to profit from them, must shoulder much of the blame. They have turned the *nouvelle vague* style into a cliché. *Les Cousins* having been a success (and itself coming after Carné's *Les Tricheurs*), we have seen in quick succession *Les Dragueurs*, *Les Lionceaux*, *Les Mariolles*, *Les Godelureaux*, all taking up much the same themes and characters. Pierre Kast's *Le Bel Age*, a philosophic essay on modern love, has yielded its questionable progeny in Doniol-Valcroze's *L'Eau à la Bouche* and *A Coeur Battant*, François Moreuil's *La Récréation*, Jean-Pierre Mocky's *Un Couple* and Philippe de Broca's *L'Amant de Cinq Jours*. Two directors have even treated the identical subject—the story of a woman who wants a child, quarrels over this with her husband, and takes a lover. De Broca made the story as *Les Jeux de l'Amour*; Godard has just retold it as *Une Femme est une Femme*.

The young film-makers have also been under fire for their lack of technical expertise. Many of their films are made sloppily and imprecisely, with an air of having been tacked together. Many of the beginners, too, revert to traditions which have now served their time, such as the *film noir* or the glossy piece seasoned with a dash of eroticism. The situations are themselves familiar; the direction is liable to be academic or slapdash. And the result is that audiences, confronted with this return to traditional *genres*, are turning instead to films made by specialists in these particular fields. Henri Verneuil's *Le Président*, for instance, did better than Molinaro's *La Mort de Belle*, although these are both Simenon adaptations and although Molinaro is certainly one of the most technically adept of the younger directors. But there is now a kind of suspicion and resentment of anything having the *nouvelle vague* label attached; and the public has seen enough mediocre films during the last year to excuse its attitude.

A practical result: all the new French films by young directors shown during the last three months have been commercial failures, those opening in Paris at the two big first-run cinemas of the Pathé chain (Le Marignan, on the Champs Elysées; Le Français on the boulevards) falling conspicuously flat. Truffaut's *Tirez sur le Pianiste*, Chabrol's *Les Godelureaux*, Astruc's *La Proie pour l'Ombre* and even Franju's third feature, *Pleins Feux sur l'Assassin*, have done only mediocre business. Jacques Demy's fine film *Lola* was a failure on the Champs Elysées, although a showing at a smaller cinema in Montparnasse brought better results. And we have reached a point where the box-office failure of one young director's film is likely to lead almost automatically to the abandonment of a similar production already planned. When the distributors lose confidence, the producers follow their lead. It may seem surprising that Chabrol, who hasn't had a box-office success since *Les Cousins*, has all the same been able to make *A Double Tour*, *Les Bonnes Femmes* and *Les Godelureaux* in rapid succession. But Chabrol's dazzling beginning brought him numerous offers and he signed contracts which are only gradually being honoured. His stock has certainly fallen, and it remains to be seen whether he will be able to retain the producers' confidence.



The critics have also played their part, and their record must be severely judged. After *Le Beau Serge* and *Les Amants* enthusiasm ran wild: any kind of new venture could be assured of uncontrolled admiration. Everything was good; everything was beautiful; each new picture as it came up was "the best film of the *nouvelle vague*." It was the critics who managed to bundle Camus, Resnais, Franju and the *Cahiers* directors confusingly together. And then, with a sudden change of front, they began a policy of denigration just as systematic as their previous adulation. With the exception of the little group which has taken over from the *Cahiers du Cinéma* team, and some provincial critics who have been able to judge the films and the situation with rather more detachment, the French critics have not known how to support works which deserved their backing or to adopt a point of view which was not inflamed. Too often, they have seemed afraid of appearing out of touch.

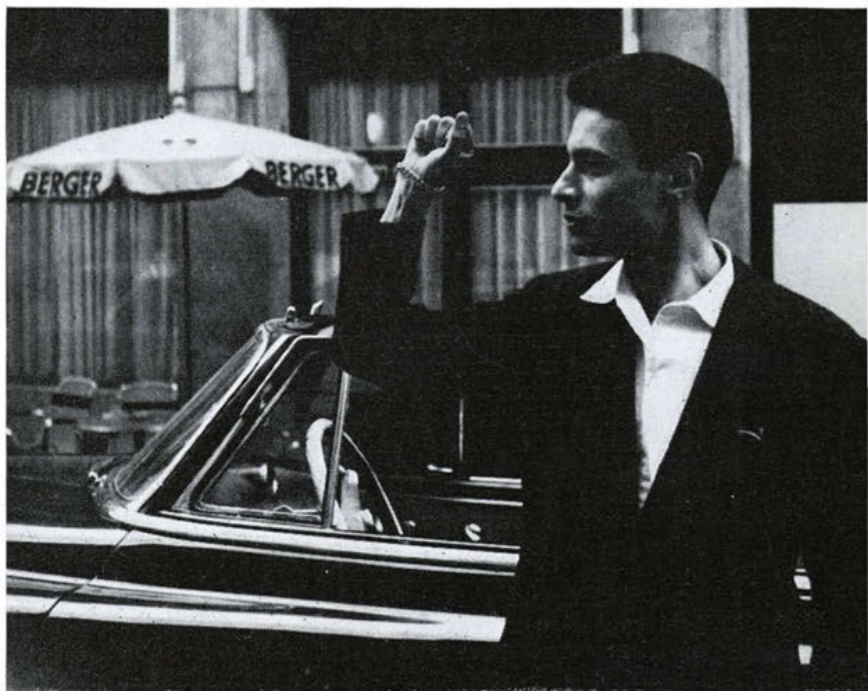
The *nouvelle vague*, however, is not just a sham. The action of Truffaut, Chabrol and Godard has been decisive in two directions: it compelled a reconsideration of the system of French production, and it was the driving force of a *cinéma d'auteurs*. The cinema, in France and to a lesser extent throughout the world, can now be regarded as an art for individuals. This notion, which has been turning up in writing and criticism during ten years, has now moved out of the theoretical stage. Truffaut, Chabrol (even in his most arguable work) and Godard are using the camera in order to make us look at the world differently. In spite of an identity of themes and subjects in the work of some directors who have emerged from *Cahiers du Cinéma*, each one's films shows us a different style. The producers' mistake has been to assume that there existed a kind of *nouvelle vague* style (like the season's style of the big fashion houses), applicable to any brand of production. And the mistake of some of the newcomers was to believe that the films they longed to make, and to make in freedom, must of necessity be masterpieces.

Among the hundred or so films produced over the last three years, there was bound to be a good deal of wastage. In the same way, the innumerable novels by young writers which have been brought out during the last ten years by one celebrated publishing house have mostly faded into oblivion. But a first novel, of which 3,000 copies are printed, is a very different matter from a film which, to be viable, must have some degree of commercial success. This is the perpetual, and still insoluble, problem of the relation between art and industry.

An alternative course would have been to set up an independent production system on the fringe of the traditional system, with an appropriate distribution scheme; and this has to some extent happened. But the commercial failure of many of these films springs partly from the fact that they were distributed through the big circuits, so reaching a public insufficiently prepared and alerted. In spite of some brilliant successes (*Le Beau Serge*, *Les Cousins*, *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, *A Bout de Souffle*), these low budget films were really designed for the art houses, where the price of seats is lower than in the circuit cinemas and where audiences are looking for something more than entertainment. The *nouvelle vague* has not been a laboratory cinema, but it could not expect to make an immediate and lasting conquest of the big public since it involved the establishment of a new language. It's the unresolved problem of film distribution which is behind the striking defeat we are recording at the moment.

## A New Language

WRITING LAST APRIL in *France-Observateur*, André S. Labarthe put forward a comparison between the young cinema and the new French novel (Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, Nathalie Sarraut, etc.). This was the first major attempt to analyse connections which have often enough been adumbrated. The "new novel", according to Nathalie Sarraut, is suspicious of "whatever the author's imagination suggests."



It has thrown out anecdote, psychological, social and functional significance, romantic feeling, even the traditional literary forms, in order to "try to construct a more solid, more immediate world," by giving it objective expression. It is here that the young cinema links up with the young novel. In modern films the story, the kind of dramatic construction so dear to the "scenarists' cinema" (that of Clouzot, Cayatte, Carné and Clément) has lost its importance. The usual stylistic devices are no less suspect than the conventions, so that we are gradually seeing the disappearance of such things as dissolves, cross-cutting and more especially flashbacks. The flashback, says Labarthe, is no longer required "*par cet ensemble de significations qu'on appelle une histoire*." The

Above: Michel Subor in "Le Petit Soldat". Below: Jean-Claude Brialy, Anna Karina and Jean-Luc Godard (right) on the set of "Une Femme est Une Femme".





new language is bound to correspond with the new preoccupations. It has less to do with telling a story than with meaning; with giving expression to some immediate reality and so restoring to the cinema its true character, which is that of an *art de l'apparence*.

The cinema of fiction and psychological interpretation, the cinema which developed from the theatre and which always allowed its audience some fixed point from which to take its bearings, is not the concern of the young directors; instead, they are turning to a literary cinema of individual expression.

### *Un Cinema hors du temps . . .*

HAVING OUTLINED THE SITUATION, and tried to analyse it as objectively as I can, my final verdict on the young French cinema must be rather a severe one. Although its aims were defensible, and its first actions deserved support, one can only be disturbed at the situation it has now created for the French cinema as a whole. The films of a small group, as well as their moral and intellectual attitudes, have infected, as it were, a whole generation of neophytes, who in their efforts to enter the Temple have set themselves to a slavish copying of the pioneers. The death of André Bazin unhappily meant that criticism lost a lucid thinker who might have helped to resist some of these errors of judgment.

The films of the *Cahiers* directors have set the tone. Most of them (I except François Truffaut's) have resolutely turned their backs on authentic social reality and have immersed us in the complexes and obsessions of an intellectual world concerned primarily with preaching total disengagement. *A Bout de Souffle* was this group's intellectual manifesto. *Le Petit Soldat* is its ideological manifesto; and the fact that Godard's film has been banned for political reasons (the references to the situation created between the F.L.N. and the extreme right wing groups by the Algerian war) should not deceive anyone as to its true character. The "little soldier" (played by Michel Subor, and a variation on Belmondo's anarchistic bandit of *A Bout de Souffle*), indulges in a profession of faith which belongs to Jean-Luc Godard, and which takes up themes scattered through other films. Political theories of right and left are meaningless, as are moral and social values; women are easy objects for physical love, but are not to be trusted; there exists no other ideal than the *acte gratuit*; and force

always wins out over intelligence. In spite of this last proposition, *Le Petit Soldat* also demonstrates that this "new cinema" is one of intellectuals who are in no doubt about their own superiority. The only moral is an aesthetic one. But this rejection of involvement of course leads to another kind of involvement, even if our artists appear too naïve to admit it.

This "cinema of scorn" is the creation of a limited group. But there is a second hazard to the French cinema, originating in that transformation of screen language I mentioned earlier. Films are moving out of time, cutting themselves adrift from the social organisation. Although it is reassuring to see Alexandre Astruc's *La Proie pour l'Ombre* making a real attempt at last to tackle some of the relationships between men and women in modern society, this is only an isolated case and one which does not seem to be rallying much support. In its conquest of a new language, the cinema is being led—as the novel has been—into a kind of formal abstraction which is likely to cut it off from the mass public. The misunderstanding aroused by Jacques Demy's *Lola* is relevant here. On the one hand, this is a film which runs happily counter to the prevailing mood of cynicism and intellectual desiccation. It is a poetic and tender work, which allows love its romantic aspect in its story of a cabaret singer at Nantes and the return to her, after seven years, of the man she first loved. On the other hand, the story's narrative method, bringing three periods of time together into a single spatial continuity, certainly makes it difficult to assimilate at a first viewing. Of course such experiments ought to be encouraged; and *Lola* gives the same sort of pleasure one gets from the concert music of Mozart. But the creation of this kind of purely aesthetic emotion involves risks of which Jacques Demy himself is well aware.

This evolution of language has recently reached its furthest point with Alain Resnais's new film, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*. Here young cinema and young novel are really linked, since the script is by the novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet. In a baroque German chateau, a sort of grand hotel for the rich of some undefined society, a man obstinately tries to revive memories for a woman of their earlier liaison—a relationship which may or may not have really existed. Past, present and future intersect simultaneously, and the spectator is given no guide through this labyrinth. All Antonioni's researches into time and duration are atomised by this film, which is certainly the most original, as well as the most startling, work produced by the French cinema. Direction and cutting achieve an identical mastery, making it the finest example of that "writing for the screen" which characterises a *cinéma d'auteurs*. In fact, all the elements only sketched in *Hiroshima mon Amour* here find complete expression.

But the totality of this success also serves to indicate the limitations of a literary cinema wholly detached from any psychological, social or moral implications. Images finally become little more than a succession of ideograms. Actors, often enough, are accorded no more and no less aesthetic meaning than the painted ceilings and columns, the gilded doors, the fountains and statues which surround them. If the film, in so far as screen language is concerned, is an advance on *Hiroshima*, it also marks a step back from the actual world. It is good that Alain Resnais exists, as an inimitable artist. But isn't there a risk that these intellectuals (and I'm not talking of Resnais himself, but of the *nouvelle vague* nucleus), already somewhat given to contemplating their own navels, may turn the French cinema into something for initiates only? Progressively, this young cinema is losing itself behind a curtain of smoke and dreams; and this cinema, which has been described as so representative of its time, is in reality as remote from the actual as anything one can imagine.



Raoul Coutard, cameraman of "*Tirez sur le Pianiste*" and "*A Bout de Souffle*", with Anouk Aimée on the set of "*Lola*".



# IN THE PICTURE

## On and Off Broadway

CECILE STARR writes: *Shadows* opened and closed on Broadway in a matter of five or six weeks and is now playing at one of the small art houses in Greenwich Village. This much-talked about improvisational film about Negroes, whites and in-betweens caught in the mechanism of a huge city was originally the enthusiastic "discovery" of Jonas Mekas, who first planned to show it at the Waldorf-Astoria at a benefit performance for his magazine *Film Culture*. After the programme had been announced, and \$10 tickets bought and paid for, the film was withdrawn so that some of the scenes could be re-shot. Some while later the second version was shown by Cinema 16, incidentally without any announcement that it was the second version. Later again, the first version was shown, and publicised as the first version. A comparison of the two showed that in re-shooting for more continuity and story build-up, some of the original spontaneity had been lost. The second version was bought by British Lion and shown successfully in England and on the continent. What is playing here, according to Jonas Mekas in his *Village Voice* film review column, is "the third version of the movie: killed, cut, and quartered, like a slaughtered pig." Its director, John Cassavetes, is now thoroughly launched on a Hollywood career with Paramount, and presumably will not want for other assignments.

*Shadows*, by the way, is the only evidence I have found of a "new American wave" in and around New York. *The Connection* will certainly be shown here after it has made its way in Europe. Other than that, the feature films we read about in the European film journals either haven't been released, or haven't been finished, or haven't been started. In typical American style, we set up the machinery for publicity, select a fancy name and recruit members, and then begin to think about getting some work done.

In contrast, European films are doing big business in the New York art houses, and we're a year or two behind. *Never on Sunday* is in its thirtieth week; *Ballad of a Soldier* in its twentieth; the dubbed *Don Quixote*, fifteenth; *Virgin Spring*, thirteenth; and *Breathless*, says *Variety*, is "sockeroo" in its fourteenth week. *L'Avventura*, in its sixth week, is rallying from harsh reviews in the *New York Times*, the *Herald Tribune* and the *New Yorker*. Bosley Crowther (*New York Times*) linked *L'Avventura* to a tendency "among a few film-makers in Europe . . . to go quite mystical, esoteric, and even intellectually abstract . . ." Among those guilty he named first Bergman, whose films Crowther condemned for obscurity until their box-office popularity (with *The Face*, for instance) disproved the points he was so effectively making. Next came Resnais, for *Hiroshima mon Amour*; then Truffaut, for the conclusion of *Les quatre cents coups*; and now Antonioni and *L'Avventura*.

"Frankly, we do not gather what Signor Antonioni is trying to prove—or to say, or perhaps just to create as an aesthetic impulse—in this film, which is so graphically constructed and brilliantly photographed that it leaves one feeling there must be some clear point." And, Crowther adds, "if we simply do not dig it, we imagine there will be others who will also find it too far out." Such reviews have hurt the film very much, but we guess that by the time some of Antonioni's other films play here, and an audience is built up that does gather and dig, possibly the critics' eyes will see better into the substance of the films. It has happened before. It can easily happen again.

*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, on the other hand, has received raves in just about every newspaper and magazine. "Unlike *L'Avventura* and other pictures about emptiness and

despair," said Mr. Crowther, "this one is clear-eyed and conclusive. It is strong and optimistic. It is 'in' ". And in it is, grossing in its first two weeks an all-time high for the Baronet Theatre. The film was generally and favourably compared to *Room at the Top*; Archer Winsten in the *New York Post* called it "the best British picture of modern times," or so the ads say. (Incidentally, Winsten is one of the best critics we have; he has been on the film staff of the *Post* for over 25 years, and has managed to survive by being its ski editor as well.)

*La Dolce Vita* opened in April, with lots of fanfare and rave reviews to spare. Paul V. Beckley (*Herald Tribune*), who had hedged on *L'Avventura*, wrote of the Fellini film that it is "not only an exciting experience, it is likely to be the most talked about movie of the year. Nobody who sees it will forget it." Mr. Crowther concluded that "it emerges one of the most moral and sobering exhibitions ever put on the screen." Playing at a legitimate theatre two shows a day, *La Dolce Vita* costs from \$1.50 to \$3.50 per seat, approximately twice the normal price range. Attendance figures show that most performances are running somewhat short of capacity, but there is little doubt that the film will be a success in every sense of the word.

Don't think, however, that the entire country is looking at big-name foreign films. Such films must succeed in New York if they are to do well in other American cities, but success in New York does not guarantee success in the hinterland. A news columnist on the *Denver Post* (population 650,000), last spring lamented the fact that *The World of Apu*, which was a big attraction in New York, closed after one week in a Denver art theatre. The same theatre played *Carry On, Nurse*, which the columnist described as "a commonplace British comedy," for seven months.

## Contrast

NEXT MONTH (AUGUST 23RD) will see the first issue of the new television quarterly *Contrast*, to be published by the British Film Institute with the financial backing of the BBC and Granada Television. The magazine reflects a unique combination of interests: the determination of the BBC and Granada to sponsor a critical quarterly, indicating their feeling that television has not been getting the critical attention in depth which they think it demands, as well as the Institute's own commitments in the television field. The National Film Archive has for some time been acquiring television material—as of course it must if its record of screen history is to be in any way complete; and on the educational side television and film cannot really be separated. We have been writing about television in *SIGHT AND SOUND* for the best part of a decade, though in the margin, as it were, of the cinema. And



Marlon Brando and Lewis Milestone  
on the set of "Mutiny on the Bounty".



although we will no longer be publishing regular articles on TV subjects, we may still find ourselves reserving a kind of poaching right on our colleagues' territory.

Television necessarily overlaps the cinema. Denis Mitchell's programme on Chicago, for instance, could just as well have been made for the bigger screen; the Ed Murrow documentary on the migrant American harvest workers, on the other hand, used techniques that belong much more to television than the cinema; and a film made up of stills and photographs and documents, like the recent programme on the real West, belongs rightly to television. But these are fragments, and hair-splitting divisions: television is whatever the television screen shows. *Contrast* will be concerned with television internationally, and with information as well as comment; its size, though not its format, will be similar to that of *SIGHT AND SOUND*. Its editor is Peter Black, television critic of the *Daily Mail*. Recently he laid claim to be the originator of the crack that it's not the commercials one finds insupportable but the programmes interrupting them. A robust degree of disillusionment, combined with an enthusiasm for the things television can do and should do, should guarantee *Contrast's* independence of outlook.

### Rome Commentary

ROBERT HAWKINS writes: The surprising, and still increasing, box-office success of a number of critically acclaimed Italian quality films on the home market has equipped producers with new courage and the determination to balance their epic-laden programmes with a larger percentage of prestige items. One welcome result has been that several long-dormant projects have begun moving off the shelf, where they have gathered dust during the recent lean years.

De Sica, for one, has finally begun his often postponed *Last Judgment*, featuring an announced cast of 131 featured players and a screenplay by Cesare Zavattini, with locations in Naples. Mystery momentarily surrounds the next Antonioni film, which should get rolling this summer. One knows only that it will feature Monica Vitti among its players, and that one sequence has already been shot by Antonioni during last spring's total eclipse of the sun. There is some mystery also regarding Pietro Germi's current production, *An Italian Divorce*, featuring a mustachioed Marcello Mastroianni and being filmed behind closed doors on Sicilian locations; and Fellini's two new projects: a sketch which he terms a "scherzo" or "divertissement", starring Anita Ekberg, in *Boccaccio '70* (the other episodes to be directed by De Sica, Visconti and Monicelli), and his new feature, said to continue one of the themes left dangling



in *La Dolce Vita*, though without involving the same characters or settings. Other intriguing "unknown quantities" include Castellani's *The Bandit*, many months in production with amateur players in remote Calabrian villages and made with *carte blanche* from the producer, Angelo Rizzoli, who has yet to see a foot of it; and Vittorio De Seta's first feature after many brilliant documentaries. Shot in Sardinia, this is likewise about banditry.

The ranks of promising young producers have been swelled here recently by the initial success of Alfredo Bini's new Arco Film, whose first project was Mauro Bolognini's *Il Bell'Antonio*. The same director has now made *La Viaccia* for Bini. Also on the Arco agenda: *Accattone*, a first feature by the scriptwriter Pier Paolo Pasolini; *Metello*, from a novel by Vasco Pratolini; *D'Amore Si Muore* and *I Nuovi Angeli*, to mark the film debut of two more new directors, Carlo Gregoretti and Mino Guerrini. Bini sensibly intends to let bigger producers compete with Hollywood on an international level, expecting to keep his own production programme to an "artisan" scale where each project can be personally followed through.

### Ford Omnibus

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR writes: Anyone given to reading the small print in the *TV Times* may have been surprised a month or two back to discover under the cast list of a *Wagon Train* episode—and not at first glance one of the more exciting, since it did not even advertise a guest star—the legend "Directed by John Ford". The *Colter Craven Story*, Ford's only venture into television so far, was in fact undertaken primarily for fun, Ford being, of course, an old friend of the show's star, Ward Bond; and the episode was one of the last series made before Bond's death.

It is by no means an unheralded masterpiece, but for the addict it is endearing, bearing as it does all the hallmarks of a Ford family picnic. The story is characteristic in its unashamed corniness: a drunken doctor who lost his nerve at Shiloh is recalled to himself just in time to perform that crucial Caesarian by a flashback anecdote from Seth Adams (set in perfect Judge Priest country, even to the riverboat at the landing) about General Grant's early troubles. But the cast list has a mystique all its own. Not only does it include Ward Bond himself, but John Carradine, Anna Lee, Mae Marsh (monumentally and intimidatingly silent as Grant's mother), Jack Pennick, Cliff Lyons, Chuck Hayward, Chuck Roberson and practically every surviving member of the Ford stock company.

Moreover, there are several private jokes to be unravelled. General Sherman, for instance, a familiar voice and a silhouette glimpsed in the darkness for about thirty seconds. The credits' attribution of the part to "Michael Morris" seems cryptic; until, that is, one remembers what names John Wayne was born and christened with. And then there is that precipitous descent to the river, which must be stock from some Ford film, but which? *Wagonmaster*, surely—and supposition becomes certainty when we catch Ward Bond as Elder Wiggs standing in momentarily for Ward Bond as Major Adams.

### Production in Britain

LINDSAY ANDERSON: *This Sporting Life*, the story of a Rugby League professional, from the novel by David Storey; Karel Reisz produces for Independent Artists. No casting announced as yet. Rank release. SIDNEY GILLIAT: Kingsley Amis's *That Uncertain Feeling*, with Peter Sellers, Mai Zetterling and Virginia Maskell; a Lauder and Gilliat production for British Lion. To be followed later in the year by ROY BAKER's production of Amis's latest novel, *Take a Girl Like You*, for Rank.

DAVID LEAN: after more than a year of preparations, script changes and rumours of ambitious casting (Brando, Olivier, Jack Hawkins, etc.), Sam Spiegel's production of *Lawrence of Arabia* is at last under way, with Peter O'Toole set definitely as Lawrence, and a screenplay by Robert Bolt from a treatment by Michael Wilson. Horizon British, for Columbia.

PETER USTINOV: producing, directing, writing and starring in Herman Melville's classic sea story *Billy Budd*. Lighting cameraman is Bob Krasker, who recently completed work on *El Cid*; locations in Alicante. An Anglo-Allied Production in CinemaScope for Warner-Pathé.

Peter Glenville with Una Merkel, who plays in his screen version of Tennessee Williams' "Summer and Smoke".





The dancing image.  
Left: Fred Astaire in  
"Silk Stockings". Below:  
Maurice Chevalier in  
"Love Me Tonight".

ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

INTERVIEWED BY DAVID ROBINSON

# PAINTING THE LEAVES BLACK



**R**OUBEN MAMOULIAN—a big, patrician figure—looks a good ten years younger than 62, which he is. He chain-smokes cigars less with the air of a Hollywood success than of the son of a prosperous late nineteenth century Armenian family, which he is also. He was born in 1898, not in Armenia, but in Tiflis, in Georgia. His barely perceptible accent—deepish r's and distinctive vowels—sounds Russian though. Both parents are still alive and well in Hollywood. His father was a banker, formerly a Colonel in the Russian army. His mother came from too good a family to indulge her passion for the theatre, except as President of the Tiflis Dramatic Society.

The Mamoulian children were raised in an artistic and theatrical atmosphere. Tiflis then as now was the cultural



centre of Southern Russia; and the Mamouliau home was a meeting place both for the resident intelligentsia and for the artists who visited the local theatres and whose performances Rouben and his sister generally saw. He recalls the great Kachalov reciting a scene from *Julius Caesar* at a party in the living room at home. "It was the greatest dramatic scene I ever saw."

When Rouben was seven the family went to Paris, where he was sent to the Lycée Montaigne. There, too, Madame Mamouliau organised charity performances in aid of the San Francisco Earthquake victims; and the letter of thanks she received from Theodore Roosevelt sparked Rouben's first curiosity about America. When he was 12½ they moved back to Tiflis, and a few years later he was sent to Moscow University to read criminal law. An announcement on a University notice-board invited young people to join Vakhtangov's Studio at the Moscow Art Theatre; and young Mamouliau, having passed some sort of entrance test, spent several memorable months there. He remembers seeing Stanislavsky: "A marvellous man with lucid blue eyes."

Back in Tiflis, about 1918, Mamouliau organised his own studio, which periodically presented short plays, and wrote theatre notices for the local paper for a season. ("It was unbearable.") Meanwhile his sister had married an Englishman; and on New Year's Eve, 1920, Rouben arrived in London to spend a holiday with her. He liked it and decided to stay. He needed work, "but was quite unfit for business." Happily, he ran into a fellow-expatriate who was looking for a producer for a new Russian repertory company. Mamouliau confidently recommended himself, and accepted the salary of thirty shillings a week and ten shillings during rehearsals, which took place in the old Russian Embassy in Belgrave Square.

As a result of the work he did with this company, he was invited by Austin Page and Vladimir Rosing to co-direct a play with a Russian setting, *The Beating on the Door*. He resigned after three days because he did not agree with the interpretation of his co-director, a man much his senior in years and experience. After five more days the backers saw his point, and he was brought back to replace the older man. This incident, added to Mamouliau's youth ("I was instructed to tell people I was 'about thirty'") and poor English ("It was the last of my eight languages"), did not endear him to the cast, which included Arthur Wontner, Doris Lloyd, Mary Jerrold and Franklin Dyall. "The first three days of rehearsal were the

worst of my life. They were terribly polite, but their very politeness was like a dagger." Still, he survived, won them over, and enjoyed a great personal success with the first night at the St. James's in November 1922. "The style of this production was the realism of the Moscow Art Theatre. Since then I have never done anything realistic. It gave me no satisfaction at all. It seems to me a completely wrong direction to take in the arts."

Now he received competing offers from Jacques Hébertot in Paris, who wanted him as producer at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées alongside Komisarjevsky and Jouvet; and from George Eastman, who wanted him for his splendid new theatre in Rochester, where he hoped to organise an American opera company. In the face of "four or five days of socratic dialogue" with Hébertot and a 300-word telegram from Eastman, he settled for America, because "As a boy at school in Paris I'd adored *Les Aventures de Buffalo Bill*; I remembered my mother's letter from Teddy Roosevelt; and anyway, I'd never seen such a long telegram."

Mamouliau found little Mr. Eastman eccentric but fascinating. Outside his Kodak empire his only interests were music and dentistry. He employed an organist to play to him at breakfast; and a quartet for his Thursday and Sunday soirées, which could get very boring after years of regular attendance. Under Eastman's ice-grey and perceptive eyes, Mamouliau produced *Carmen*, *Faust*, *Boris Godunov*, as well as Gilbert and Sullivan and Viennese operettas.

"Eastman, of course, was only interested in the musical aspects. I was already seeking a truly dramatic theatre, a theatre that would combine all the elements of movement, dancing, acting, music, singing, décor, lighting, colour and so on. *Sister Beatrice*, which I produced at Rochester, was the most interesting thing I have ever done, I think—the climax of this kind of theatre. It was based on Maeterlinck's play; the music—all for organ—was written by Otto Luning, and Martha Graham came to Rochester to arrange the dances."

After two and a half years Mamouliau felt it time to leave Rochester, and went to New York, where the Theatre Guild engaged him as a teacher and director. It was for the Guild that he directed *Porgy*.

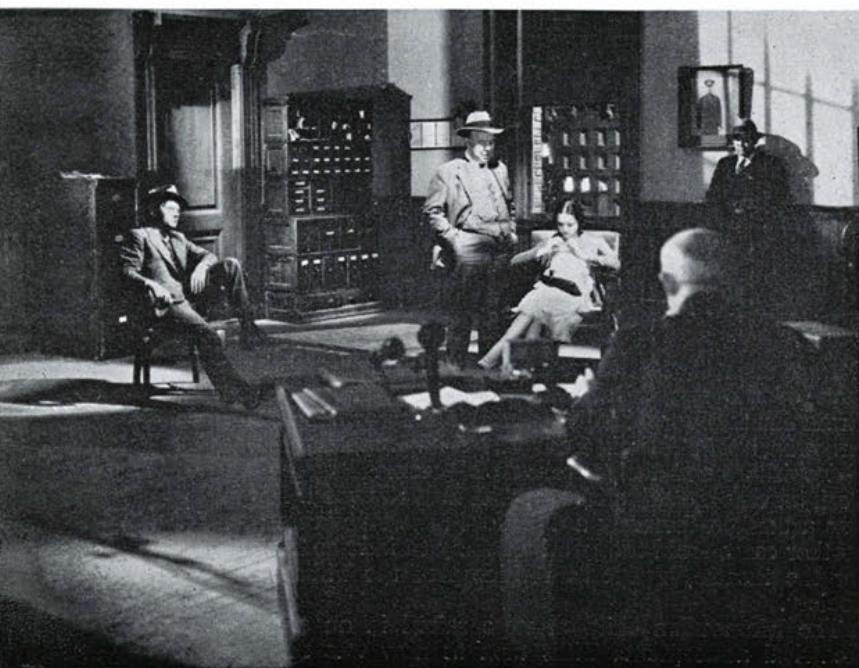
"*Porgy* made me overnight. In it I tried all my ideas of a dramatic integration of many elements . . . At this time I felt it should be possible, in a stage production, to take a snapshot of the stage picture at any moment, and record an artistic composition. So each movement and grouping was minutely rehearsed. The negro actors were often required to adopt poses which were neither comfortable nor natural, but which looked right on the stage. That's stage truth.

"Then there was a scene I put in which was not written in Hayward's play—the famous Symphony of Noises. The curtain rose on Catfish Row in the early morning. All silent. Then you hear the Boum! of a street gang repairing the road. That is the first beat; then beat 2 is silent; beat 3 is a snore—zzz!—from a negro who's asleep; beat 4 silent again. Then a woman starts sweeping the steps—whish!—and she takes up beats 2 and 4, so you have:

Boum! – Whish! – zzzz! – Whish!

and so on. A knife-sharpener, a shoemaker, a woman beating rugs and so on, all join in. Then the rhythm changes: 4:4 to 2:4; then to 6:8; and syncopated and Charleston rhythms. It all had to be conducted like an orchestra."

*Porgy* ran for 2½ years on Broadway and was eventually transferred to London. In the meantime Mamouliau did a number of other productions for the Theatre Guild and for independent impresarios, including O'Neill's *Marco Millions* (1928), Nichol and Browne's *Wings Over Europe*, Capek's *RUR* (1929), Rolland's *The Game of Love and Death* and his own adaptation of *A Month in the Country* (1930), with Alla



Guy Kibbee and Sylvia Sydney (centre) in "City Streets", the gangster picture which was Mamouliau's first Hollywood film.



Nazimova. In 1931 he directed Schoenberg's opera *The Hand of Fate* at the Met—"a tough assignment, but an interesting problem to integrate the acting of people with this music which at first seemed so formless."

### *Applause (1929) and City Streets (1930)*

"FOR FIVE WEEKS I WENT around the Astoria Studios in New York, where I made *Applause* for Paramount, watching everything and asking questions. At the end of that time I went to them and said, 'I'm ready.' If you have an eye it doesn't take you long . . .

"Now in those early days of sound, people just thought of films as being all dialogue—talk, talk, talk. I wanted to do things you couldn't do on the stage. I wanted to use a mobile camera; but that was impossible because the camera and the cameraman and the director and the assistant cameraman and probably the assistant directors were all squashed together in a sort of house on wheels. And all the sound was recorded on a single track—the mike picked up everything you didn't want it to. If you had a letter in a scene, it had to be soaked in water. Like that it didn't make a thunderous crackle, of course, but it looked like a Dali watch.

"The blow-up came on the third day. I wanted to shoot a scene entirely in one shot. It's where the girl—who's come to New York from a convent as a strip-teaser—is lying in bed in a cheap little hotel room. Her mother, played by Helen Morgan, sits beside her and sings to her the only kind of song she knows: a burlesque number, but she sings it as if it were a lullaby. As she sings the girl fingers a rosary and whispers a prayer. But, they said, we couldn't record the two things—the song and the prayer—on one mike and one channel. So I said to the sound man, 'Why not use two mikes and two channels and combine the two tracks in printing?' Of course it's general practice now; but the sound man and George Folsey, the cameraman, said it was impossible. So I was mad. I threw down my megaphone (all directors still used megaphones in those days) and ran up to Mr. Zukor's office. He was with Mr. Lasky and Monta Bell when I barged in: 'Look,' I said, 'Nobody does what I ask . . .'

"So Zukor came down and told them to do it my way; and by 5.30 we had two takes in the can. Next day I went to the studio very nervous. But as I went in, the big Irish doorman, who'd always ignored me before, raised his hat and bowed. It seemed they'd had a secret 7.30 viewing of the rushes in the studio, and were so pleased with the result that they'd sent it straight off to a Paramount Sales Conference. After this, what Mamoulian said, went. 'Well,' said George Folsey, very cheerful, when I went in, 'Where would you like your cameras today?' 'Today,' I said, 'I'll have four cameras, and I want one shooting up from the floor.' This meant they had to send out for men with pneumatic drills because the studio floor was concrete, two feet thick. I waited till they brought the men in: then said 'O.K. That's enough. I've had my revenge.'"

His first film in Hollywood was *City Streets*, also for Paramount.

"Shakespeare used the soliloquy to give oral expression to thoughts. Since then the soliloquy had become obsolete. But it was a wonderful device: so I wanted to use a close-up of Sylvia Sidney, alone, in prison, and superimpose over it all her impressions and recollections. Again, everybody insisted it was impossible and that the audience would never understand what was going on. I argued that in the silent cinema they had used—and the audience had accepted—stylisation, simile, visual poetry. So why not in sound? That's what I wanted to do with sound and, later, with colour. Now, of course, this use of audible thoughts over a silent close-up has become a convention . . .

"You know, there are ten killings in this film, and you don't actually see one of them . . .

"In those days the average working day was 16 hours. I remember doing a scene at midnight with Cooper and Sidney; and they fell asleep during the take."

### *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1932)*

"I WANTED TO MAKE THE transformations a real vicarious experience, more than just a trick. So I used the camera in the first person. The entire opening reel is shot as if through the eyes of Jekyll, played by Fredric March. The audience does not see him—they are him—until he looks into a mirror.

"To accompany the transformations I wanted a completely unrealistic sound. First I tried rhythmic beats, like a heart-beat. We tried every sort of drum, but they all sounded like drums. Then I recorded my own heart beating, and it was perfect, marvellous. Then we recorded a gong, took off the actual impact noise, and reversed the reverberations. Finally we painted on the sound track; and I think that was the first time anyone had used synthetic sound like that, working from light to sound. We've never divulged—and I'm not going to tell you now—how we managed the transformations without any cuts or dissolves."

### *Love Me Tonight (1932)*

LOVE ME TONIGHT starred Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald, and had music by Rodgers and lyrics by Hart. It has been compared to Clair and Lubitsch, regarded as a model musical by such practitioners as Kelly, Minnelli and Weill, and is clearly one of Mamoulian's favourites.

"By now I could use visual and aural images as I pleased. For instance when MacDonald's awful aunts open their mouths, you hear the yapping of little dogs instead of their voices. Then there's a moment where MacDonald is fearfully embarrassed and drops a vase; and there I have the sound of dynamite exploding, because that, emotionally, is the size of it. But they were very shocked in the studio!"

### *Garbo and Queen Christina (1933)*

"GARBO IS A WONDERFUL INSTRUMENT, which must be treated right. She is an intuitive artist with very good and correct instincts . . . I'd heard that she was very difficult, and would



Tea on the "*Jekyll and Hyde*" set. Rouben Mamoulian with his two stars, Fredric March and Miriam Hopkins.



insist that everyone except the cameraman—including the director—must leave the set when she was playing an intimate scene. I couldn't have that, of course; and she said 'No, I won't do that to you.'

"We started the first day's work, and I said, 'Well, let's rehearse.' 'Oh no,' she said, 'I never rehearse. I can't. You tell me what I do and where I go. Then take it. The first take is always the best.' Eventually I persuaded her to try one shot both ways: 'And you must promise to do it my way if yours doesn't work.' So we did one take her way, then began to rehearse. As we rehearsed, she said, 'You know, you're getting less and less.' 'If only you knew,' I said, 'I'm getting more and more.' When we'd done both takes, she came up to me and whispered, 'Please do not print the first one.' So after that we always rehearsed.

"The scene in the inn bedroom, where she walks all round the room, touching everything, caressing everything, storing the whole place in her memory—to my mind it's a sonnet. It was done to a metronome. I explained to her: 'This has to be sheer poetry and feeling. The movement must be like a dance. Treat it the way you would do it to music' . . . I always divide people into those who are crazy about this scene and those who ask what the heck's it all about anyway?

"There's an example of how logic is not always artistic truth. In the last scene, she is standing on the prow of a sailing ship moving forward; yet her hair is blowing *backwards*. People often point out—quite correctly—that the wind must be behind, so that her hair should, logically, blow forwards. But if I'd shown it like that, even though it would be correct according to natural laws, it would not give the same sense of motion forward.

"That last scene presented a lot of difficulties. L. B. Mayer called me and said we must change the end of the script: it was too unhappy and depressing. We must keep John Gilbert alive. Well, we couldn't do that, of course; but it was true that we had in some way to make the ending uplifting, exhilarating. I had the idea of moving in to a big close-up of Garbo standing

on the prow; but at the time that presented difficulties. Bill Daniels, the cameraman, said it was impossible because as you changed the lens the diffusion changed. Then I remembered the magic lantern I'd had as a child in Tiflis, with four pictures on a single slide. So I suggested that they had four graded diffusers in one slide, mounted in a carriage in front of the lens. They went straight off and made it and brought it back the same afternoon. It worked perfectly. Now, of course, it's standard practice.

"Garbo asked me: 'What do I play in this scene?' Remember she is standing there for 150 feet of film—90 feet of them in close-up. I said: 'Have you heard of *tabula rasa*? I want your face to be a blank sheet of paper. I want the writing to be done by every member of the audience. I'd like it if you could avoid even blinking your eyes, so that you're nothing but a beautiful mask.' So in fact there is *nothing* on her face: but everyone who has seen the film will tell you what she is thinking and feeling. And always it's something different. Each one writes his own ending to the film; and it's interesting that this is the scene everyone remembers most clearly . . ."

## Becky Sharp (1935)

FOR WE LIVE AGAIN (1934), an adaptation of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, with Fredric March and Anna Sten, Mamoulian brought the stage designer Serge Sudekin to Hollywood, while on *Becky Sharp* he had Robert Edmond Jones. This was the first film in the new Technicolor three-colour process. It was to have been directed by Lowell Sherman, but he died after two weeks' shooting and Mamoulian took over. An extraordinarily appreciative adaptation of Thackeray, and one of the most beautiful colour films ever made, it probably contains Mamoulian's best work in the cinema.

"As soon as you use an element on the screen it becomes subject to dramatic laws. This is as true of colour as of everything else. So I wanted to shoot everything from the start. I took four or five weeks to prepare my plans. My idea was to build up the colour dramatically. I wanted to start with black, white, grey; then ooze into colour. And I wanted the dramatic climax of the film to coincide with the colour climax, which would be predominantly red, because that is the nature of red. (It's strange, you know, that this should be so—that red should be the most exciting colour to the eye—because scientifically and physically speaking it is the most sluggish colour of all—36,000 vibrations as against 76,000 with yellow. It has almost no light value—the nearest approach to black. Scientifically it is the least aggressive; psychologically it is the most aggressive. It's an odd phenomenon; the brightest colour is really yellow. But colour's my hobby-horse . . .)

"In planning *Becky Sharp* I faced an interesting dilemma. The climax is the ball before Waterloo. A messenger arrives and quietly informs Wellington that the French army is forming. The news is passed around the room and the guests gradually begin to leave. Now, logically, the first to leave should be the military; but that would mean that all the red would be drained out before the other colours—the colours of the civilians' costumes. Colour is such a strong emotional medium, of such subconscious potency, that if the gradation were wrong here it could destroy the fundamental reality of the scene. It sounds practically insane; but what I did was to sort the extras into colour groups. Then, one by one, each colour group left the ballroom, till only the red were left. Hence the officers were the *last* to go instead of the first. On the set it looked absurd, but that's the way I shot and cut it. And no one has ever remarked on it; because it makes such sense dramatically."

Garbo and Lewis Stone in "Queen Christina".





## *Blood and Sand* (1941)

FOLLOWING BECKY SHARP he made *The Gay Desperado* (1936), a musical satire about Mexican banditti; *High Wide and Handsome* (1937), a pioneering drama, and a screen version of Odets' *Golden Boy* (1938). In 1940 and 1941 followed two pictures with Tyrone Power. *The Mark of Zorro* was an undistinguished swashbuckler, but in *Blood and Sand* Mamoulian continued his experiments with colour:

"Colour cinematography tends to brighten and cheapen natural colour. The problem was to counteract that. I realised that colour in films is nearer to painting than to the stage. Now if you look, for instance, at a crimson cloak painted by El Greco, you'll find that what first appears as a mass of colour is in fact a subtle blending of all sorts of shades, with patches of pink and blue and purple and green. So I treated the colour the way a painter would. I devised what came to be known as the Mamoulian Palette. Beside me on the set I had a huge box of scraps of material—scarves and handkerchiefs and so on, in all colours—so that if a costume or a set needed a bit more of a particular colour—a colour accent, as it were—I could put it in myself. And I had a collection of spray guns beside me, so that I could spray colour on a costume or set or even an actor. The art director had made me a beautiful chapel; and he was very upset when I sprayed everything with green and grey paint. Then again, there's a banquet, which was done entirely in black and white. There were flowers on the table and (naturally) the leaves were green. I think when they saw me painting them black they went and told Mr. Zanuck I'd gone out of my mind . . ."

After *Rings on her Fingers* (1942), a conventional comedy which he made to work out his contract with Fox, Mamoulian's activity in the cinema was limited for some years. This was his great period in the theatre. *Oklahoma* (1943) was the culmination of his ideal of the stage musical. *Sadie Thompson*, which he adapted with Howard Dietz, was a comparative flop; but was followed in 1945 by *Carousel*, which repeated the success of *Oklahoma*. Many connoisseurs regard *St. Louis Woman* (1946) as the greatest all-coloured musical.

## *Summer Holiday* (1948) and *Silk Stockings* (1957)

MAMOULIAN RETURNED to the cinema in 1948, with *Summer Holiday*, based on O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!* and praised by *Sequence* as "an enjoyable film . . . The designs are light and elegant and the colour attractive," although "its two styles, experimental and nostalgic . . . don't always mix." It marked the transition to the cinema of Mamoulian's ideas of a musical theatre; and—appearing in the same year as *The Pirate*—it was a significant forerunner of the *On the Town* school.

"O'Neill—who was then already very sick with Parkinson's disease—was very excited by my ideas for adapting his play. The sort of thing I did: there's a scene between Mickey Rooney and the local bad girl (Marilyn Maxwell, who played it beautifully) in which she grows redder and larger with every close-up. Then there's a series of scenes in the styles of famous American painters—Grant Wood, Thomas Benton, John Curry. From them I learned what marvellous things you can do just by using different shades of the same colour . . . One of the pictures was Grant Wood's 'Daughters of the American Revolution.' We saw lots of elderly ladies for this, and finally I picked out three who might well have been the original sitters—quintessentially American. I spoke to one of them, but she said, 'Pardonnez-moi, Monsieur Mamoulian, mais je ne parle point américain.'"

Nine years, and more productions in the theatre, separated this film from *Silk Stockings*, a Cole Porter musical adaptation of *Ninotchka*.

"In this film I was most interested in dance as a dramatic expression. I had two marvellous dancers—Astaire and



Fourth of July picnic in "*Summer Holiday*", Mamoulian's nostalgic musical based on O'Neill's "*Ah, Wilderness!*"

Charisse—and I wanted to use dancing to show the progress of their love story. I'd begun to use dancing like this, as a means of interpreting character, as early as *Love Me Tonight*, of course, which is really the same recipe as *Oklahoma* and way ahead of its time.

"I have a sort of trade mark: somewhere in every one of my films there is a cat. When we'd finished *Silk Stockings* I suddenly realised there was no cat. So (at great expense) we had an extra day's shooting, just for the cat. Did you notice it?"

## *Cleopatra*

MAMOULIAN IS STILL full of energy, enthusiasm, ideas—for an opera film in Italy, a ballet film in Russia, co-productions and so on. His most recent project, *Cleopatra*, was one of his rare abortive ventures:

"I was engaged on *Cleopatra* in all for one year and three months . . . I resigned, shall I say, because I felt in the then circumstances I could not entirely realise the film I had conceived . . . There were many changes of plan: first we were to shoot in Egypt; then in Spain; then in England. I would have liked to shoot it all in Egypt, of course. In the end I did shoot a few night scenes in England. It was a real English winter; and the great white columns of that beautiful set were wreathed in light mists; while every time anyone spoke, there were clouds of steam from his mouth. It had a marvellous quality, quite beautiful, but not exactly Alexandria!

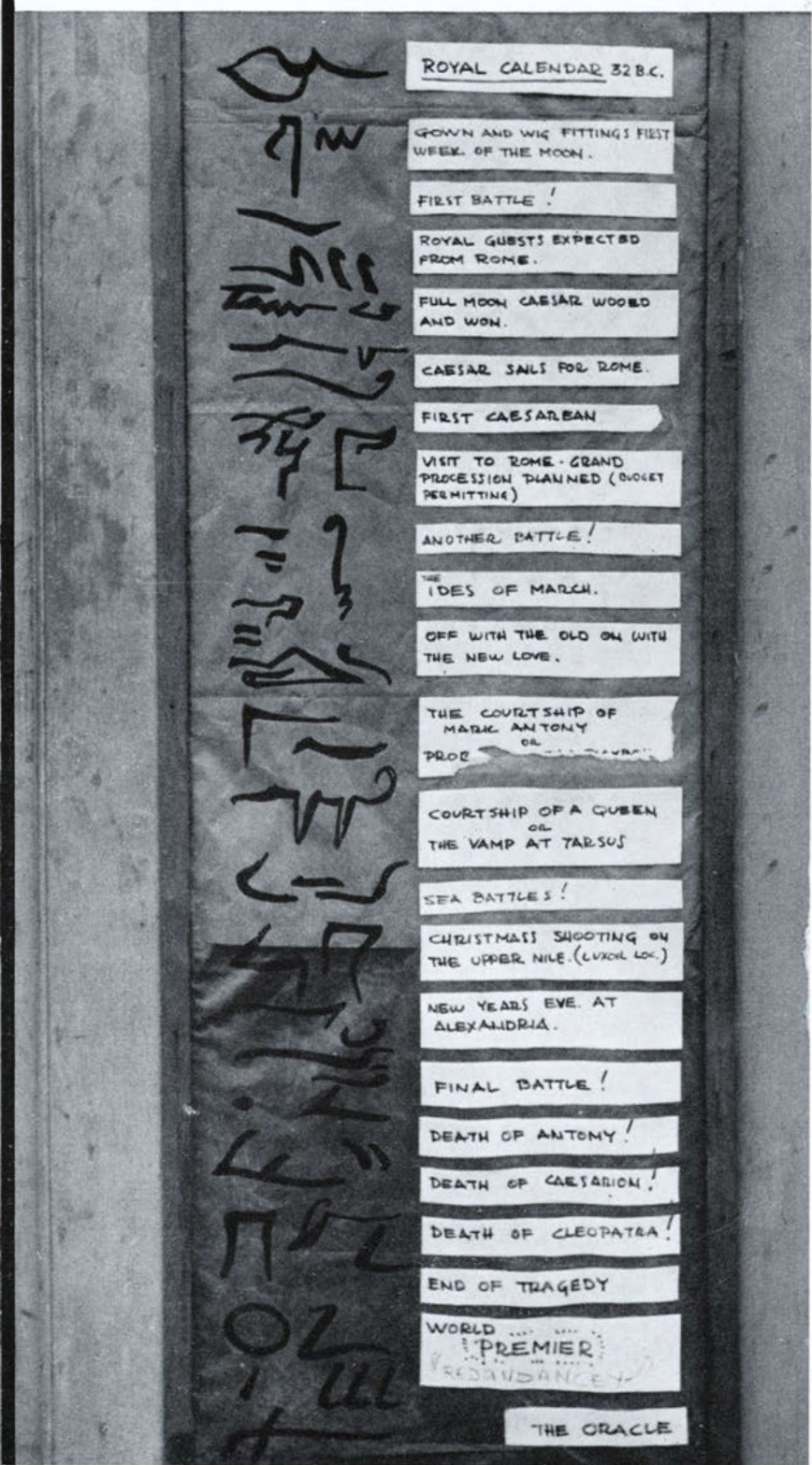
"I didn't see it at all as spectacle—which has no interest for me for its own sake: way back I was offered *Quo Vadis*. What interested me in this was the character of Cleopatra. I'd only have used spectacle where it was a necessary background. Visually, of course, it would have been fascinating. Egyptian design of that period had a wonderful simplicity and elegance, and such interesting colour: black, yellow, green, purple—very little red or orange. Alexandria was a white city, because it was a Greek city. Imagine the contrast, and the mutual impact, of the highly civilised Egypt and the rude democracy of Rome . . . I think *Cleopatra* could have been fine art and fine entertainment. It's possible, you know—not a contradiction. Indeed, I think it's an ideal . . ."



# DEATH OF A SET

Pinewood's Alexandria stood through most of last winter and spring, through Elizabeth Taylor's illness, the lengthy arguments over the *Cleopatra* insurance, the substitution of Rouben Mamoulian as director by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, and the calling in of Lawrence Durrell to write a new script. Now the whole *Cleopatra* project has removed itself to sunnier locations, the stone lions and temples and obelisks have been pulled down, and the twelve minutes or so of film actually shot by Mamoulian—whose final cost, one newspaper cruelly estimated, must have been in the region of a thousand pounds a foot—is all that survives. These photographs, taken shortly before the demolition of the set, record its sad splendours. The "Royal Calendar" below was put up by the unit outside Elizabeth Taylor's dressing-room; and will be set up again in California, or Italy, or wherever Alexandria is finally reconstructed.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS PICTON











"The Turbulent Years".

# CANNES

## 1961

THE POLICY OF CANNES is not to choose its own entries but to accept whatever is submitted by each country. When a national selection committee's disregard for an interesting work seems blatant, then occasionally that film is "specially invited." Obviously the system is not a sure guarantee of the best. Nevertheless Cannes has generally held up a mirror to the annual state of world cinema; and if it has also done so this year, then 1961 promises to be mainly pale and without pretensions.

*Exodus*, which opened the Festival, could not but cast its pall and was a grave miscalculation. Why *Exodus*, when René Clément's *Che Gioia Vivere*, though calling for a sharper sense of parody, would still have struck a most stimulating note of stylish fun? Mr. Preminger's press conference is worth recording, however, if only for its tactical nerve. The journalists arrived prepared to extract their pound of flesh; but after an amiable preamble, in which he confessed to speaking no known language with any proficiency, Mr. Preminger embarked on an endless recital of dates and theatres at which his film would be shown, including Lima, Peru. He then proceeded to a detailed account of his next four projects, including the synopses of two which had not yet been scripted. As a final master-stroke, he announced to journalists whose pens had long since slipped from their fingers that he was prepared to talk about anything except the artistic merit of *Exodus*, which was, after all, their concern and not his. Well, at least we knew when we could catch up with *Exodus* in Lima.

One turned to the Japanese for balm; to Kon Ichikawa's *Her Brother*. Ichikawa's preoccupations begin to come clear. People under peculiar stresses fascinate him: obsessive guilt

and the inroads of conscience in *The Burmese Harp* and *Conflagration*; the situation of the old man in *Kagi* whose failing sexuality drives him to devising extravagant erotic projects for his wife and her lover as a stimulus to his dying libido. Now in *Her Brother* there is a lonely, wayward boy whose only strong emotional bond is with his sister. Their parents are a selfish mother, absorbed in the practice of her Catholic religion, and a shadowy father who writes, and seems to have withdrawn completely from his family. This is an intimate study calling, one would have thought, for the small screen. In fact, it is flawlessly composed for the wide screen and shot in ravishingly muted colours intended to evoke the mid-Taisho period (about 1920) in which the story is set. I learned from Kinugasa at a press conference next day that in Japan it is almost always the company which imposes the shape of the screen according to its own vested interests and not according to the subject.

Hopes start to rise, for Ichikawa's film, though holding one at a detached distance, is always fascinating. It is followed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz's *Mother Joan of the Angels*, which adapts (very freely) the Devils of Loudun story to seventeenth century Poland. A devout priest is summoned to a nunnery where the sisters are given over to unseemly cavortings and the Mother Superior is herself a prey to no less than nine devils. He undertakes the long and tortured battle for her soul and falls himself a wracked victim to love. The gratuitous murder of two innocent peasants ensures his own damnation—and by sacrifice, he hopes, her salvation—making a climax more picturesque than dramatically potent. Much of the film, though, is powerfully conceived. Scenes of exorcism in the chapel move from hypocritical serenity to a frenzy of obscene defilement; a charged atmosphere of frustration and pseudo-sanctity is evoked, stunningly recorded in sharpest black and white. Finally the film fails to sustain an inexorable drive, and a key scene of dialectic (between the priest and a casuistical rabbi, both played by Mieczyslaw Voit) leaves one questioning its philosophical weight. Nevertheless, a film of stature.

Dovzhenko's widow, Yulia Solntzeva, is charming and communicative: difficult to reconcile her with *The Turbulent Years*, the war fresco prepared by Dovzhenko and now executed by her. It is certainly immense: bullets zip across



the vast screen; fire tears in sheets and the land rocks. Through it all the hero's zeal burns ever brighter. There are, too, images of the peaceful land whose harmony floods the soul. But the acting, the relationships and the film's total gesture are of such over-simplification as often to verge on the ludicrous. One must add that the work has been extensively cut (rumour says by a quarter) and it is impossible to assess its original conception; as it stands, it frequently appears incoherent.

Days pass and a slump sets in. Sjöberg directs heavily a flaccid stage adaptation called *The Judge*. Fabry's *Duvad* is a lumbering melodrama of passion and peasants. A daring still from the Norwegian entry, *The Passionate Demons*, lures the audience into the cinema, but they are out again before the film gets to the scene they came to see. There is minor uplift in Yugoslavia's *The Fourteenth Day*, concerned with episodes in the lives of a group of convicts on a fortnight's leave, accorded by Yugoslavia's new penal laws as a stimulus to social reorientation. This is unpretentious, and sincerely directed by Zdravko Velimirovic. But the Festival seems uncommitted, not to say unhinged. A leading member of the Japanese delegation, at a lavish self-service spread on the *plage*, helps herself generously to a puce mound of underdone beef and cherries. "So many naughty people in Argentina," sighs Beatriz Guido, lost in a private world.

A migration starts for the Rue d'Antibes, whose out-of-festival presentations assume each year an increasing importance. Unfortunately the Rue d'Antibes was denied the film which would have set the seal on its enterprise: Resnais' *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, rejected by the Festival selection committee as was *Les Mauvais Coups*, François Leterrier's first film starring Simone Signoret. The French rumble darkly of victimisation. Finally *tout Cannes* crams into an airless cinema for a midnight showing of *Les Mauvais Coups* (which next day's gossip generally castigates as sub-Antonioni and pretentious), while I steal illicitly into the Palais to sit in guilty isolation as the projectionists check the copy of *La Mano en la Trampa*, by Leopoldo Torre Nilsson.

The director and Beatriz Guido here revert to the climate of *House of the Angel*. Once again all is not what it appears in the heavily oppressive bourgeois house; and Elsa Daniel is again the virginal heroine haunted by a sense of foreboding. I wonder how we would have greeted *The Hand in the Trap* if we had never seen *House of the Angel*? Rapturously, I think. Torre Nilsson's style is more than ever authoritative: the Wellesian influence has been absorbed, fully incorporated, and the feeling for texture is now his own, recalling but not imitating Ophüls. Curtains, windows, trees constantly make their subtle contributions. At its worst (there is a middle section which tends to mark time), the film still exerts fascination; at its best it is probably superior to anything he has yet done. I believe there is no director today who could match him if he decided to make an elegant Gothic horror film.

Italy's entries number five, although one, Cacoyannis' *The Wastrel*, is inexplicably attributed to Cyprus. This extravagant number of entries, insinuate the French, is a sop to Venice. Be that as it may, the vitality of the Italian production is outstanding.

Cacoyannis' film is imaginatively shot. I must confess to being utterly unaware (as many claimed was glaringly evident) that much of the sea action was filmed in the studio tank. To me these scenes carried complete conviction, and the relationship between Van Heflin and his son (Martin Spellman), adrift through a long night, is handled generally with tact and delicacy. When it is not, the fault lies mainly in the script. Ellie Lambetti, originally ill at ease acting in English, grows into her stride and in a minor role still imposes her incomparable presence. Certainly the film lacks the appeal of Cacoyannis' Greek themes, but as an "international" subject it is distinctive, and finally moving.

Francisco Rabal in Buñuel's "Viridiana".



Clément's "Che Gioia Vivere": the opening sequence.

*La Ciociara* marks De Sica's return to direction in collaboration with Zavattini. But the script (from a Moravia novel) is neither a well-organised conventional one nor a discursive personal progression sufficiently distinguished to disregard the rules. Opening with a perfunctory scene of passion between Sophia Loren (a war widow) and Raf Vallone, the story takes to the country with the widow bent on finding security from the bombs for her young daughter. Finally, the girl is raped by the advancing liberators. Moral (one supposes): you can never run away from war, and in the general chaos friend and foe are likely to prove to be one and the same. Sophia Loren's is an authoritative performance, often deft and funny yet still attaining tragic size. It almost succeeds in imposing a unity on the film, though not one of intellectual purpose.

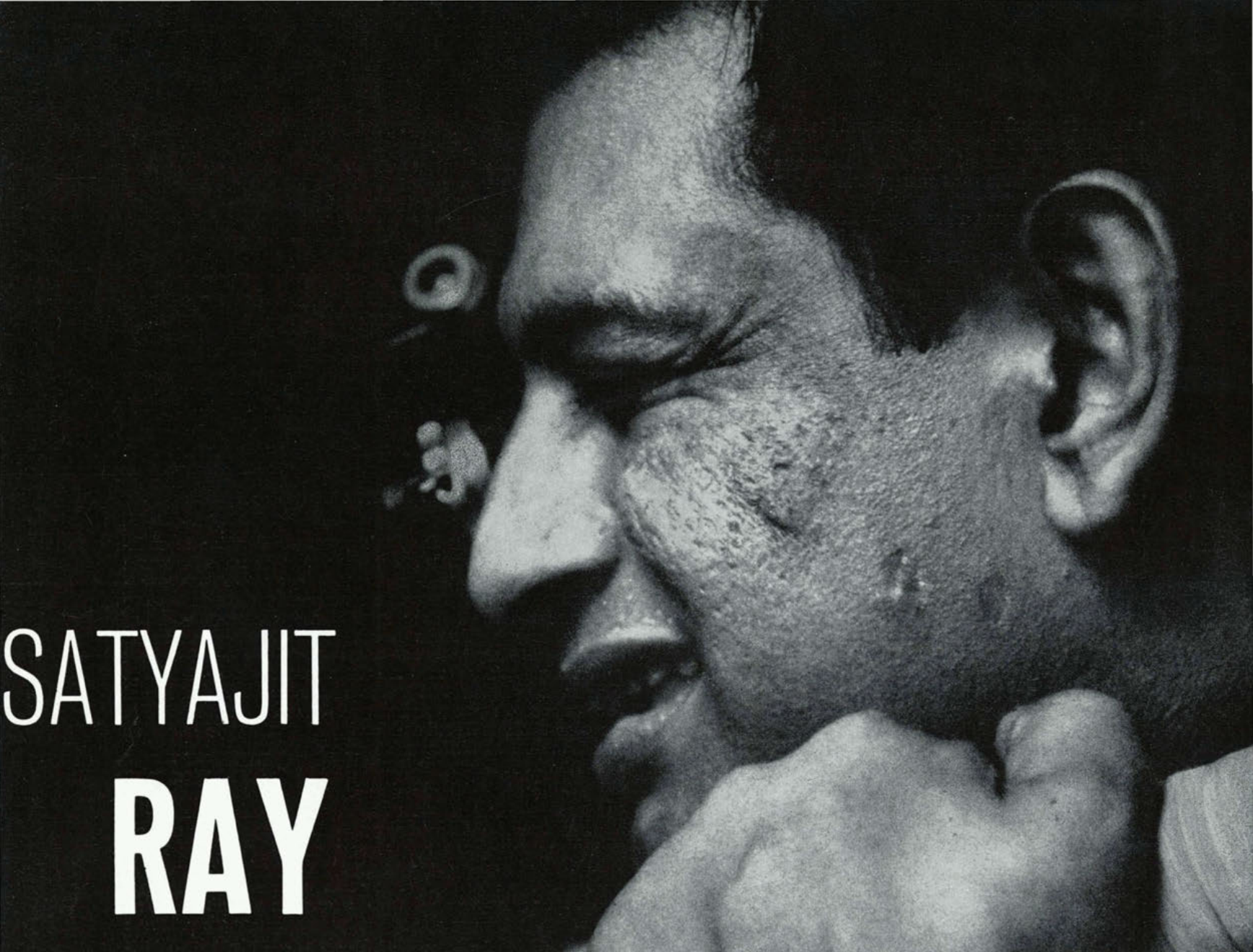
Valerio Zurlini is clearly a talent to watch. His *La Ragazza con la Valigia* (a *conte* of a spiritually lost young woman and the boy who protects and helps her, falling sadly and hopelessly in love in the process) is less ambitious than his *Estate Violente* but more firmly realised. Claudia Cardinale reveals a charming talent, and one congratulates Titanus on building her up to her present position as the first young actress of the Italian cinema without attempting to exploit her as a sexual menace. She is also the star of Bolognini's *La Viaccia*, which I was unable to see.

There were few shorts or documentaries of distinction. Britain's *Do-It-Yourself Cartoon Kit* was warmly appreciated, which was more than could be said for our feature entry, *The Mark*. Pierre-Dominique Gaisseau's feature documentary *Le Ciel et la Boue* contains some astonishing reportage of

(Continued on page 150)







# SATYAJIT RAY

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A STUDY  
BY ERIC  
RHODE





IN GENERAL, SATYAJIT RAY'S films embarrass the critics. Admirers go impressionistic, talk airily of Human Values, and look offended when asked to be more precise. Detractors are no less vague. Some of them call his work charming, in a tone which could hardly carry more weight of suspicion and distrust, or say they are not interested in the problems of the Indian peasantry. Only M. Truffaut, in describing *Pather Panchali* as Europeanised and insipid, has firmly placed himself in the opposition. This mustn't have taken him much trouble, since he apparently walked out of the film after the first two reels. Those who stayed on to the end, however, had every reason to be more hesitant; for the supposed simplicity of this work—and indeed of all Ray's films—disarms the critic. Only after close scrutiny do most of them turn out to be artefacts of the most subtle sort. It is a case of art concealing art, brought about by Ray's precise construction of plot—so that craftsmanship seldom shows—and by his ability while shooting to improvise against this structure in a way which gives his work a continual spontaneity.

I have heard some of Ray's admirers say that analysis of any kind can only destroy this spontaneity, and therefore distort one of the most important qualities of these films. But to believe this surely is to fall into an old trap. The myth of the Natural Genius, piping his native wood-notes wild, dies hard in certain quarters; and Ray it seems is to be the latest victim sacrificed upon its altars. He can only be made to play this part, however, if one ignores his robust plots and the density of his symbolism. Not that his best work is mannered, as this might suggest. His symbolism is not like that of Bergman and Pabst (say), who are usually considered symbolist directors. All art in a sense is symbolic, and the success of symbolism lies in it being unobtrusive. This is not so with Bergman and Pabst, who, in trying to conceal the thinness of their material, let symbols sprout out of their feeble plots like straw out of a scarecrow. They fail because they are unable to construct suitable plots, which in turn is a failure properly to explore their material. In the best of Ray's films, on the other hand, the integration of symbol and action is so assured that we are hardly aware of the technical problems involved in such a feat. Yet Ray's continuing success has not been bought cheaply. After shooting *Pather Panchali* he went through a period—at about the time he was filming *Aparajito* and *Parash Pathar* (*The Philosopher's Stone*)—when he had great difficulty in making plots. It is part of his talent's strength that he managed to break through this sterile passage into the lucid and rich world of *Apur Sansar*.

What is so interesting about this talent is the limited means by which it has reached such richness. Ray's vision so far has been a narrow one. In his films there is no portrayal of evil (in the Christian sense), nor is there any sign of violence. The staple ingredients of the Occidental film—lust, murder and rape—play no part in his work. Most of his central characters are sensitive, often idealised people, usually scholars or rich men who have been dispossessed and therefore made vulnerable to poverty and suffering. (The trilogy could as well have been called *The Unprotected* as *The Unvanquished*.) Though this range is highly limited, I don't think it counts against him; for within it Ray has managed to deploy the old tragic conflicts with remarkable ease. What he has in fact done is to describe the relationship between art and life, duty and the emotions, free will and destiny, in very personal terms. And this he has brought off, I believe, by showing us how, in a most vivid way, these conflicts tie up to his major, almost obsessive, theme.

2

"In what way," asks Ray, "can man control the world, and what is the price he must pay for trying to do so . . . ?" This, as I would see it, is the Promethean theme behind all his films. Why it should be this one rather than any other is a debatable point; but I would surmise that Ray is haunted in this case by the most traumatic event in recent Indian history: the granting

of Independence in 1947. With this event India was born into responsibility. Besides her foreign problems she had to handle the problem of industrialisation; of modernising the agricultural techniques of backward settlements; and of coping with the underfed and the under-privileged. Though the scope of such a task may have been invigorating, there was always a heavy price to be paid. Independence brought with it the most terrible of border massacres, and mechanisation involved the destruction of ancient pieties. Inevitably, the India of Science was against the India of Myths.

Though Ray is clearly troubled by this situation, and is indeed involved in it, his feelings remain ambivalent; and from this ambivalence arises a tension which gives his work its force. In *Jalsaghar*, the protagonist is an ageing nobleman who, finding himself out of place in the modern world, tries to escape from it into the world of music. He fails. The sound of trucks passing to a factory owned by his *nouveau riche* neighbour echoes through his hollow palace and shatters the necessary silence. Unable to continue his traditions into the modern world, he destroys himself. Though this nobleman is little more than an old panjandrum, he becomes for us an oddly moving figure; for he is shown as the last representative of a civilisation Ray admires, a civilisation in which the mandarin virtues of ceremony and folly are prized and in which love of the arts takes a central place.

Ray's feelings may be divided about this nobleman, but they aren't half as complex as are his feelings about the characters of the trilogy. Though Ray's sympathies are primarily with the new men (like Apu) as they break away from superstition and ignorance, he is at the same time aware of the price they must pay for this liberation. The power involved in trying to control the world requires ruthlessness. It may also imply an evasion of life. So Apu betrays his mother's affection by leaving her to die alone in a remote village; and later, as a man of learning, begins to lose touch with life—with Mother Earth, as he puts it—to his natural detriment.

3

One would never call Ray a reactionary—too obviously is he one of the new men himself. This doesn't stop him feeling great tenderness for those who have lost out, for those who have been unable to control the world, at least in part. Most of *Pather Panchali*, for instance, is taken up with describing the hopelessness of such people—a hopelessness which, as Ray makes clear, is in no way a matter of despair. He shows us that they are fatalists who yet manage to enjoy the world. This mood is established from the opening moments of the film, as a child ineffectually sweeps a sun-baked courtyard while kittens frolic in the shade. This is life lived at its most primitive, biological level. Food is the primary pre-occupation: the mother continually crushes harsh roots; the children steal fruit or yearn for sweets they can't afford; the grandmother quietly gobbles in a corner. At no point does the family stop eating its scraps of rice, its rotting guavas, or its pieces of raw sugar-cane.

At first these biological processes seem to be the only defence against a destructive universe, in which the impending jungle creeps through a broken wall, and the monsoon beats down the house. Even amongst the villagers there seems to be no defence. Neighbours are rapacious, and education at the hands of the local grocer seems as futile a preparation for life as is primitive medicine a guard against death. (Death with Ray, though regular, is always unexpected. Not surprisingly he wishes to film *A Passage to India*.) The world is uncontrollable and the family—each in his own way—is its victim. The father, a gentle, distracted egoist, dreams about his ancestors' greatness but is unable to make a living. His neighbours cheat him and he writes plays no one wants. The mother, as the inarticulate conscience of the family, is the only one close to achieving some control over her life; but her failure is evident in her continual scrubbing and scraping, and in the





"Pather Panchali": Apu and his sister move through the wilderness of a cotton field.

nagging which alienates those about her. Above all there is the grandmother, who never despairs though she has the least hope. It is not in gloom but with wry joy that she says, "I am old and I have nowhere to go." Unlike Gorki's grandmother, who is an earth-goddess embodying (as one of the revolutionaries says) the best of Old Russia, she is never more than irresponsible and childlike. All she can offer is love.

From the difference between these two women one can deduce a significant difference between the Gorki and the Ray trilogy. Gorki is concerned with the drama of Revolution and with showing how his characters, even at second-hand, react to this. Ray is not interested primarily in such a drama. In developing his characters he is more concerned with understanding the world than with changing it—though to understand *is* to change it. His comment on social progress remains, often aggravatingly, ambiguous. The difference between these two trilogies is not necessarily antagonistic: it is the difference one might say between the zestful Russia of the late Twenties and present day neutralist India.

Anyway, even if they wanted to be, the characters of *Pather Panchali* could never be revolutionaries. Unable to control their lives in any way, they are never more than childlike. Though it may be a brilliant touch to have all the characters like children in a film which purports to be about a child, and therefore to relate a primitive agricultural society to the limitations of this age group, it does induce a certain ambiguity of vision. Are we or are we not looking at the world through the eyes of a child? Ray never makes this clear. But he does deal effectively with another problem arising from this situation. Though similar, the characters never become monotonous; for the scenes in which they are involved are always epic, and therefore embody the differing strands of the various themes.

There is the pivotal moment, for instance, when Apu sees a train for the first time and begins to understand the nature of man's power. (Trains are a recurring motif in the trilogy, and this scene takes on a particular force when we realise how later in Calcutta Apu is to try to commit suicide by throwing himself beneath one.) Though the sequence is a short one, it does—by its build-up—dominate the film. We see Apu and his sister move through the wilderness of a cotton field. As they listen to the eery humming of telegraph wires, seeds drift from white plumes. Then the train chatters past. Its smoke, like a

feather, obliterates the sky. For us, all quite unimportant perhaps: but for Apu a mechanical Messiah has been born. Just as typical of Ray's art is an earlier, more complex sequence which in its unstressed interplay of moods reminds us of Chekov. It is evening, and the house is in darkness. The grandmother tries to thread a needle but is too proud to admit failure. Near her the mother fusses alone. The father stops trying to write a play and, holding up a moth-eaten bundle of manuscript, says gently, "Things have come to a pretty pass." Beside him Apu is learning to write. The father smiles at the success of his work. A passing train whistles. "Now," says the father, "write the word for wealth."

Through such a mosaic of action Ray establishes his major themes. In an uncontrolled world the comic travelling theatre, the father's escapism, and the folklore of the grandmother appear incongruous. The mother, in trying to control a dwindling budget, goes out and sells the family silver; and the price she pays is to rob Apu of his patrimony and to destroy the lingering remains of a family tradition. This theme of control and its cost is, as I have written, the central one of Ray's work; but it does have an almost mystical extension which is to play a large part later in *Apur Sansar*. It is to be found even in such a simple scene as the grandmother rocking the newborn Apu in his cradle. Though she fears for his future she yet looks at him with hope. This mingled regard reveals her knowledge and her strength; for the old woman knows that ultimately the power of life itself transcends the suffering of people caught in an uncontrolled universe.

In the last resort, the destructive force is negated by the force of continuing life. Though the fetid lake may swallow the last trace of the sister's existence, and the jungle obliterate the house, it is the images of the passing bands and kickshaws, of children running through sunlit glades, and of trains, especially trains, with their hope of work in Benares and their promise of a new and better society, which remain burnt into the mind. Aptly does the English for *Pather Panchali* mean *On the Road*; for it is above all the activity of life that counts. As one of the villagers sagely remarks, "it's staying in one place that makes you mean."

4

And now the growing Apu begins to control the world. Premonitions of this in the pivotal scene of *Pather Panchali*, when he first saw the train, are confirmed by the pivotal moment in *Aparajito* when a shot of the boy triumphantly holding a small globe is followed by a shot of his home-made sundial. Time and space have begun to be conquered.

*Aparajito* is an uncertain film. There is no plot to it, only a series of episodes related to each other by the most tenuous of connections. Symptomatic of this is the restless shifting of location: Benares and the father's death, Dejaphur, a village, Calcutta, and another village—it is all very fragmentary, and Ray tries to obscure this by over-playing the train motif, by sensationalist cutting, and by a symbolism which is too often of the Bergman and Pabst sort. Even the pathetic fallacy, of all things, is dragged in at one moment. As the father dies, pigeons scatter over the city.

The problem in making a sequel to a well-plotted film is that of finding another plot for the same characters in which they can, without strain, be put to a different use. In *Aparajito* Apu has become the protagonist, but has neither the personality of a child nor the character of an adult to sustain the role. The kind of adolescent problems which could interest us are beyond the range of Ray's fastidious talent, and the character is seen in middle distance. The mother, too, doesn't fulfil the new demands made on her as a central character. In *Pather Panchali* she was never more than a form of conscience, nagging away like an aching tooth. There was no need for her to be more than this. Naturally such a character can never develop into a major role. The consequence of this is that her part in *Aparajito* becomes an increasing embarrassment to Ray, until finally—she is so much at cross-purposes with the

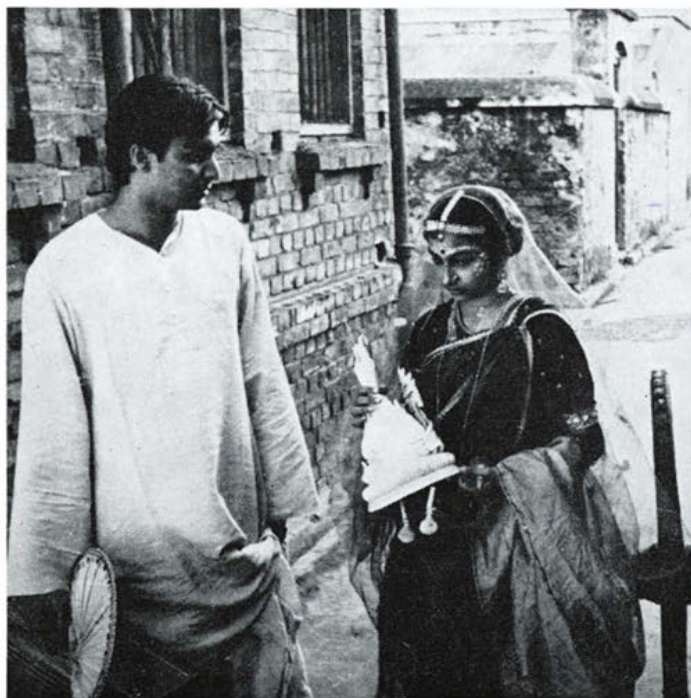


action—he forces disastrously the pathos of her death. To enact this scene expressionistic technique runs riot. The camera veers over the walls and lingers on ominous flames. It is all very embarrassing. Unfortunately it is not the only confusion here: we never learn if we are looking at the world through her hallucinatory vision or not; nor is it explained why this sick woman, chatelaine of a large house, is allowed to die alone.

These failures are a matter of more than one film. They relate to an overt self-consciousness in Ray himself, which manifests itself in the mannered facetiousness of his next film (*Parash Pathar*, 1958/59) and in the obtrusive symbolism of *Jalsaghar*. The latter is a curious piece (imagine *Rosmersholm* rewritten by W. B. Yeats), but through being consistent it does work; and because of this such symbolism as the chandelier, representing the Tree of Life, is made plausible. But in *Aparajito* no such convention is sustained. The film is neither realistic nor symbolic: it is merely awkward. There is a sense of hiatus about it which only just manages not to be a sense of void. It is saved, in fact, by a number of typical Ray vignettes, such as the school inspector who admires Apu's work and so bestows on him a benign smile, or the bed-sitter bachelor who lends the boy a box of matches and then makes a pass at the mother. On the lesser level it is helped by a magnificent evocation of Benares with its lively ghats. It would be wrong therefore to describe *Aparajito* as a failure. It manages (just) to hold our interest between the earlier masterpiece of *Pather Panchali* and the later, probably finer, masterpiece of *Apur Sansar*.

5

At this point, Ray conquered his self-consciousness by finding a way in which he could develop the themes of *Pather Panchali* into a new unity. By making Apu give up his study of science in order to become a writer, Ray puts him into a position which also tells us much about his own preoccupations with art at that time. Apu's failure as a novelist reflects on Ray's most serious problem: that of transforming the dialectic of his themes into a direct sensation of life. "He doesn't make it," says Apu to his friend Pulu, speaking of a character in his novel but referring unknowingly to himself. "He doesn't make it, but he doesn't turn away from life. He faces up to reality." Ray wants to do better than this. He wants both to face up to reality *and* to make a work of art that conveys such an apprehension. In showing why Apu fails as



"Aparajito": Apu and his mother in the family's lodgings at Benares.

a novelist, and how he comes to terms with life, Ray has I believe succeeded in doing this.

Apu fails because his art is wilful. In trying to control the world he has gone too far, and so cut himself off from the sources of life. Ray brings this out vividly. From a shot of Pulu inviting Apu to a wedding and telling him in an affectionately mocking tone of the Olde World village where it is to take place, Ray cuts immediately to a panning shot of Apu walking along an embankment, chanting a poem which ironically reflects on his own predicament. "Let me return to thy lap, O Earth! . . . Free me from the prison of my mind. . . ." This is in fact what has happened to Apu: he is caught in the prison of his mind. Inevitably divorced from the industrial society around him, Apu is locked away in his garret room with his onanistic flute-playing and with his (of all things) autobiographical novel. People enter his room as if they had come from some foreign land.

But this deadening sense of control is jolted by his unexpected marriage—by quite extraordinary circumstances he is forced into this, and so initiated into the happiest period of his life—before being finally destroyed by his wife's death. What the universe giveth it taketh away . . . or so at first it seems to Apu. Reality becomes incomprehensible to him, uncontrollable in a way he had never envisaged. He thought he had achieved some sort of order—in one of his books he kept a dead fern leaf—and that he had somehow categorised the world. But now, as he moves grief-stricken through a forest, he comes across a bunch of ferns growing by a tree and is shocked by their mysterious otherness. His novel, he sees, is inadequate: he has misunderstood everything. Unable to carry on as a creative being, he withdraws from life. It is only later, in his first encounter with his five-year-old son, that he realises how wrong he has been. The boy, by his very presence, acts as a criticism of Apu and makes him aware of how he has failed to face up to life. (Life here is understood to relate inextricably to a sense of duty and obligation.) It is through the boy, in his uniqueness and his unselfconscious vitality, that Apu begins to return to sanity.

It is not difficult to see behind this final scene the kind of criticism Ray must have been making of his own past work:

"The World of Apu": Apu and Aparna return home to Calcutta after their wedding.



how art without life leads to a kind of death, and how the artist should neither have a total control over his material nor be entirely controlled by it, but must in some way transcend this situation. One of the reasons why I think *Apur Sansar* is the best film of the trilogy is that in it Ray has managed to see how this can be done. He has brought it off, I believe, by raising his subject to a mythopoeic level without at any point destroying its realism.

As he sails with Pulu down a river to the Olde World village, Apu sings: "Where are you taking us, O Fair One?" The boatman, thinking he is being referred to, smiles. But this humour masks a profound irony, for Apu is unaware that the fair river is leading him directly to his yet unknown wife. The river in fact is the central symbol, linking together both the realistic and the mythopoeic levels of the work. It represents both the arbitrariness of nature and the regenerating power of water. It is by a river that Apu theatrically decides to marry; it is by a river—now shrunken to a stream—that Pulu tries to pull him back to life after four years of mourning; and it is by a river finally that he and his son are reconciled.

On a mythopoeic level the film tells of a god's death and resurrection. The point is stressed that Apu is an avatar of Krishna, the flute-playing god. Krishna, you will remember, was allowed for a brief time to love a milkmaid named Radha; and so for a brief time is Apu allowed to love Aparna, his wife. But only for a brief time. After Aparna's death Apu descends into the underworld, where he is imprisoned with his own echo in a landscape of salt. (Though he is like some holy man, going with mat and shawl into the wilderness, his sacredness is sick. Ray—and this is an unexpected belief for an Indian—shows little sympathy for those who seek spiritual contemplation at the expense of duty.) Apu's resurrection into the world through his son is a clearer, more enacted statement of the theme of regeneration which we found in *Pather Panchali* (see the grandmother rocking Apu in his cradle). Ray's touch, however, is here more sure; and the two characters, without losing their definition as human beings, take on the firm lines of allegory. The feeling of eternal recurrence in this scene—Apu in a symbolical sense returns to the village where he was born and confronts his childhood self—gives the whole trilogy the cyclic form proper to myth.

Quite a number of people have criticised the way Ray idealises his characters; and certainly to see Apu as an avatar of Krishna may be thought presumptuous. Ray reassures us, however, through his use of Pulu, Apu's friend, who laughs at

Apu for his self-regard and yet admires him to the point of idealisation. On this point the myth works for us, because we are conditioned by Pulu's critical approach. Where it does falter perhaps is during the wedding scene. As one of the guests says that the curse has become a blessing, the music on the sound track implies that Ray takes such a magical suggestion seriously. This is never made clear. Again, symbolism is forced when Apu throws his novel away and the sheets fall gently over the forest. But these are minor points. In general the myth works beautifully. It ties together themes, illuminates details, and brings an immediate sense of life to the machinery of plot.

## 6

This account of Ray's films has so far neglected his originality as a director: his ability to apprehend experience in cinematic terms. There is his sense of cutting, for instance, which has developed from the clumsy opening sequences of *Pather Panchali*, where the figures often appear to be caught in the frame, into an unusual, implicatory style. This style falls somewhere between Eisenstein's anti-narrative montage and Hollywood's story-telling techniques. The success of Ray's symbolism, his ability to compress densely, is in part brought about by this style (see, for instance, Apu's attempted suicide, or his search for a job). Too often, though, Ray's diffidence in committing himself is helped by this implicatory—and therefore illogical—technique. We never learn, for example, if the nobleman in *Jalsaghar* has lost his fortune because of an obsessive interest in music, or because he has abandoned himself to mourning after the death of his family.

Ray's handling of actors is also exceptional. Like De Sica he knows how to winkle performances out of children, and how to create relationships in a quick though not a glib way through the use of the striking glance or the precisely right gesture. Unlike De Sica though, whose characters must always be up and doing something, he has (and I think this is a unique achievement) a sense of the inner poise of his characters, of a stillness which is never static. His frequently sustained shots of the *Jalsaghar* nobleman, as he sits meditating, do not bore us.

These accomplishments are technical, and as much the work of Ray's excellent and permanent team of collaborators (Mitra, the cameraman, Ravi Shankar, the composer) as of Ray himself. What first concerns us is the single-minded way in which he has grown as an artist. His achievement, for me anyway, has been that he has managed to find a rich connection between his own personal problems and the problems of a society. In coming to terms with his own creative powers, in other words, he has found it easier to understand the world about him. The duel between life and death, between manic control and hopeless abandonment, relates closely—if one can use Melanie Klein's psychological terms—to the artist's need to pass through the depressive (or mourning) phase in order to re-create his destroyed inner world. In discovering this in his own terms, Ray has temporarily managed to resolve the conflicts within himself and the conflicts between his various themes.

Under western eyes Ray's diffidence—his unnecessary ambiguities of vision and statement—is often infuriating. Yet in the last resort his achievement is so positive that we forget this. In his hands the most unusual of occurrences, like the *ad hoc* wedding or the first encounter of a father and his five-year-old son, become representative of our deepest feelings, of our most normative of day to day experiences. This golden touch should be more than respected. Indeed, for my own part, I believe that what a Bengali doctor once said to Yeats about Tagore could as well apply to Ray: "He has spoken out of life itself, and that is why we give him our love."

"The World of Apu": the final sequence. Apu is leaving, having failed to make contact with his son; the child, here a tiny, distant figure, comes after him.





# WEST COAST REPORT

COLIN  
YOUNG

THERE IS, UNFORTUNATELY, no new wave in Hollywood. Bob Hughes' phrase "the old undertow" works much better as a description of the afternoon and evening meshes which Hollywood's old guard successfully throw over even the least radical of the younger newcomers. Thus, films continue to look alike, with the same weaknesses, the same excesses. Optimism is a burden; conformity an escape from the struggle. Imagination is still put into mechanics rather than story or style. An eery example of this concerns M-G-M's *Ben-Hur*, still thirsting after new audiences. The quotation is from a recent issue of the *Los Angeles Mirror*. "A free showing of *Ben-Hur* for the deaf will present an unusual situation at the Egyptian Theatre on Saturday morning . . . Two women will act as interpreters. Stationed on a special platform erected at the right of the screen, the women, each taking over one half of the performance, will relay the dialogue in sign language and mouth the words for lip-readers. They will wear long phosphorescent gloves and luminous lip make-up. Infra-red spots will black out all but their hands, arms and lips . . ."

One way in which the European, although apparently not the British, independent film-maker has an advantage over his Hollywood contemporary is his opportunity to work outside a conventional union situation. For it is not so much money which a film-maker needs as time. With time his imagination can go to work, and he can invent things which are not expensive, which permit him to stay within his budget but give him the quality he needs in a scene. Irv Kershner, whose feature *Hoodlum Priest* was one of the two official U.S. entries at Cannes, has come to the conclusion that he, like so many others, is being forced to work under a ridiculous pressure. "Do you think that Truffaut, Bresson, or Stevens or Zinnemann set out to make a picture in just so many days? Of course they don't. Why should I?"

We know precisely why—because otherwise he would go over budget. (In fact *Hoodlum Priest* did go over, although this does not seem to have been Kershner's fault.) But Kershner, like so many others, is tired of this easy answer of budget. It presupposes one way of making films; and, in fact, one set type of film. A budget of "x" dollars, with a union crew, and average sets and costumes and one or two minor stars, can shoot for "y" days. It is all in the books.

Denis and Terry Sanders, Curtis Harrington, Stanley Colbert and the other young "independents" of Hollywood can be heard asking each other how many days they had, and how much (not whether) they went over budget. On *The Connection* (in New York), Shirley Clarke had a budget of \$167,000, used a union crew and shot in 28 days. In Hollywood on *Night Tide*, his first feature, Curtis Harrington had a much smaller budget—"less than \$100,000"—shot for about the same amount of time, but kept himself for the most part

independent of the studios and their rules. For *War Hunt*, the Sanders' second feature, the budget was \$265,000 (including one star, John Saxon). This allowed only 15 days shooting, plus second unit.

Where does quality come from in such conditions? When time costs \$800 an hour (the Sanders' figure on *War Hunt*), something has to give. The Sanders, like so many before them, knew very well that they would prefer to take a close-up in a scene, to give them more latitude and control in editing, but they could not afford it. On *Shadows*, John Cassavetes was not under the same pressure of time. When he found that he could not after all shoot in a night club that had been promised him, he was able to take the time needed to improvise the effect in an empty room, with two or three lights and a handful of people dancing into and out of the darkness. But the Sanders had 15 days in which to shoot a hundred page script—almost seven minutes of usable film a day, much of it requiring considerable searching after characterisation and very little of it straightforward dialogue. They had planned on 18 days, but when their production date had to be postponed they picked up two additional costs—a 15 per cent increase in union wages (applicable after February) and a state property tax (applicable only during the month of March). The solution: an 18-day schedule was cut to 15.

Time automatically costs money in Hollywood; and in the end is the same as money, because budgets are kept high through the necessity to use union technicians, and to accept



"War Hunt": the unit on location. Photograph by William Claxton.



their notions of what constitutes a minimum crew. No one gives any sign of wishing to wreck the unions. But there is considerable resentment about being budgeted out of the film business by their requirements. Thus the unions, although formed for the best of reasons, now run the risk of being discredited because of their inflexibility. There is no reason why a night exterior without dialogue should need 70 technicians (the experience recently on one of Daniel Mann's films); there is no reason why a documentary shot in Colonial Williamsburg (by George Seaton) should require 65 technicians. But this happens all the time.

Some of this has spilled into the trade papers recently, provoked by an editorial by Thomas Pryor in the *Daily Variety*. He made the point that less rigid production methods have produced interesting and often commercially successful films in France. In the midst of the resulting controversy in *Variety*, a suggestion was made to create a new kind of contract between producers and the unions—one which would permit technicians to be employed for a token stipend, deferring the rest of their salary to be paid out of the film's income. This works already for others—writers, directors, producers and occasionally actors. It would permit a technician to work on a project which interested him without fear of a union fine. It would encourage more production, and so create additional employment. As an added incentive it might be necessary to consider the deferments as a loan from the technicians to the producer, such loans to be paid off at the going bank-rate, either to the individual technicians or to a union pension fund.

In the meantime all the burden is borne by the investors and the films' producers. And, if an independent film is not quickly sold and does not have an immediate success, the director/producer may never have a chance to make another; or like John Cassavetes (after *Shadows*) or Irv Kershner (most of the time) he must pay penance (and/or debts) with a year or so in television. Films requiring a quick sale naturally tend to be made according to some recognisable stereotype; and we are back where we started, with look-alike, sound-alike "entertainments".

Clearly the unions are not to blame for everything. A major cause of the Hollywood picture's distance from contemporary reality is Hollywood's own distance from the rest of the world. Perhaps the American film will some day benefit from the tug-of-war between New York and Los Angeles, but at the moment we can be aware of little more than the continuing disadvantages of their geographical and cultural separation. Hollywood's instincts are still basically theatrical, and there is almost none of that experimenting with form and style which is so noticeable in the better European directors' work. Yet at the same time Hollywood is cut off from the theatre, except by purchase of talent or "property", a sort of lease-lend

which over the years has benefited neither Broadway nor Hollywood. A mutually destructive provincialism has been established on both coasts. Even the best of the stage directors who come to Hollywood seem to learn little about film-making, and begin to forget what they knew about handling actors. The television directors, at one time a source of considerable hope, fall back on a sort of camera trickery which as often as not conceals their basic lack of story sense. Actors become producers and, to an astonishing degree, are the least adventurous of all, imitating their former successes and unwilling to experiment—even, surprisingly, Marlon Brando, who produced a rather old-fashioned, if enjoyable, film in *One Eyed Jacks*.

Disappointment is at the root of the outspoken criticism of Hollywood which we find in the writing of some of the younger New York critics. Jonas Mekas, editor and publisher of *Film Culture* and now director of *Guns of the Trees*, is the author of some of these attacks. In the context of a discussion of the "New American Cinema" (*Film Culture* Number 21, Summer 1960), he places himself wholeheartedly in the so-called New York school, denigrating almost everything which has recently come out of Hollywood, or is likely to come from it. Unfortunately he exaggerates legitimate grievances, in a kind of inverse provincialism, and significantly over-emphasises the role of "roughness" and "impurity" in contemporary American art. It is simply not true that the "entire experimental film movement" is in New York. Other work is being done elsewhere—in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, Boston, Wichita, Iowa City. It would be surprising if this were not so. But these others are often working alone. They are not living so close together, nor are they as good at publicity as the New York group. And this, in the end, makes the difference.

The New York experimenters have encouraged each other, have created a myth of themselves which bore fruit—and films. But now, apparently not content with the films, they have fallen in love with the myth itself. Having managed to make a film "with no budget at all," they believe profoundly that this is the only way to make films. Unfortunately this freedom from commitment to Hollywood's waste and over-efficiency is thus bound up with a disinterest in financing and financial responsibility which suggests and might lead to irresponsibility. It would be a simple and unfortunate mistake to make. There is so much impatience with the distance a film-maker necessarily feels from his subject. He is separated from it by stars, by the front office, by the New York financial office, by the entire system which seems content (and determined) to keep Hollywood on familiar tracks. The film-maker wants to imitate the painter, the poet, the dancer—desires desperately to have their freedom and control. But he cannot: his work is too expensive.

No one satisfactorily solves this problem. The French new wave has resulted in a large batch of films which can find no distributor or exhibitor, presumably because they are too bad. In the United States, many independents find no distributor even when their films are not bad. Morris Engel is his own distributor for *Weddings and Babies*; Shirley Clarke, before her Cannes success, was prepared to do the same for *The Connection*; Lionel Rogosin had to lease a cinema to secure a New York opening. For all the efforts of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, Cinema 16 and the various interested universities, there is a grave need in the United States for showcases with the stature of the National Film Theatre or the Cinémathèque. Some such role may be filled in the future by an American Film Institute which is in the process of being formed (see the Summer issue of *Film Quarterly*).

Meanwhile it would be a help if there were a label with which we could identify the few individual and somewhat



"Too Late Blues": John Cassavetes and Stella Stevens.





John Saxon in "War Hunt". Photograph by William Claxton.

personal enterprises which have recently issued from the West Coast. But there is no label; there is no Hollywood school or group among the independents. Among the more interesting of the younger men—Cassavetes, the Sanders, Kershner, Harrington—there is very little fraternisation. But they have one thing in common: a preference for working in Hollywood.

### John Cassavetes

THE LEAST LIKELY to choose Hollywood, one might have thought, is Cassavetes. His remarkable first feature *Shadows* owed nothing to the studio method. But it becomes increasingly clear that he has little desire to repeat the experiment. Just before starting *Too Late Blues* at Paramount, he told me: "It is not something I am likely to do again. It's like doing summer stock: it's a good experience to *have had*. I couldn't do it again because, for one thing, I just wouldn't have the energy. Other things being equal, I would prefer in future to work in a studio rather than on location, especially in the case of a film like *Too Late Blues* where 98 per cent is interiors. There is a certain excitement you get from location shooting that is sacrificed on the set, because although there is nothing that can't be built it still remains artificial. But I'm happy to give up the battling that location shooting involves."

When the shooting was over he was not disillusioned. We can assume that he had the usual pressures on him from "above"—how much time to take in shooting, how much set he required, how many takes of a scene to print, and so on. But you would guess none of this by talking with Cassavetes, or his assistant Seymour Cassell (who has a part in the film). In discussing his picture he insisted that he retained all essential responsibility. When I spoke of the budget pressures on some of his contemporaries in town, he argued that these

pressures were either being exaggerated or, if not, that it should be possible to avoid them.

He had made a similar point a few weeks before. "I choose to shoot in a major studio because of the facilities and the technical help . . . However, when you work in a major studio, when they own the story (as they do with *Blues*), you have to be very clear in your mind why you are here. If you are here primarily to make money, then compromise is all right, in fact it becomes obligatory. In my case, I have to know when to draw the line, and I have to be prepared to quit at any time. If I am prepared to quit rather than give in to changes, then I am safe. It is only when you are not prepared to do this that you are in trouble."

However this may be, Cassavetes does not seem to be in trouble. Since starting on *Too Late Blues*, Paramount has offered him a five-picture contract, which he is accepting. His first film under this new arrangement will be shot in Rome with Sidney Poitier in the late autumn. It is the story of a friendship between a G.I. (Poitier) and a young Sardinian girl who has become a ferocious killer—of Nazis. At one point she allows him to help her, and after this contact they become friends. According to Cassavetes, it is not a war film so much as "a story about people". He also has in mind a subject he calls "The American Dream". "Confusion has replaced patriotism; the intellect has replaced love. In the last couple of decades or so, something has happened to the American dream. I don't quite know what it is, and it's still not very clear in my mind, but it's a subject I want to do one day—it will probably be one of the five."

At this point Seymour Cassell commented that Europeans seemed more enthusiastic about films than Americans, partly he thought because the work of the better directors was more personal. Cassavetes took up the point. "You have to be absolutely dedicated to what you're doing. And, furthermore,



it has to be extremely personal to survive the method itself. This applies to the mechanics too. I found on this film that the technicians could do anything. Sometimes they didn't want to—as for example when I wanted the operator to use a hand-held camera. I didn't want the camera to be steady. I wanted it to jog. So I staged the shot so that the operator had to run backwards while he was hand-holding. This way, if I created problems which then involved the technical crew, they would work out ways to cope with them."

The conversation drifted on to story structure and problems of dramatisation. "One thing the veterans know how to do very well, and I don't really know yet, is how to open up a story, how to take an audience right into the heart of it quickly and economically. However, I do not want to begin with a flat premise which tells everyone what the film is about. I want people to decide for themselves what is going on. This is the method I've used in *Too Late Blues*. It may be terrible—we'll have to see. But I hope people like it."

As for that, it is too early to say. Paramount seems pleased enough, or they would not have extended their agreement with him. I saw only an hour or so of the shooting, and the last two scenes of the picture in a first cut. This was far more polished technically than *Shadows*, as could be expected. But in that tiny excerpt (and the work witnessed on the stage), the actors were seen to be more obviously acting, to be more predictable. If this is any indication, we can expect a complete change of pace and, in the work to come, an increasing interest in story, a growing dependence on it. And this is the way of most films. Some would regret that it had to be the way for the author of *Shadows*. But in fairness to him, it will be necessary to receive his first studio film on its own terms, not on the terms of its predecessor, which will be followed or imitated by others.

## Denis and Terry Sanders

THE SANDERS BROTHERS ARE close to the completion of their second studio feature, *War Hunt*, a story set in the final days of the Korean war. Their first, *Crime and Punishment, U.S.A.*, disappointed many of their followers and has in general been better received by festival committees and by film-makers than by audiences, although its distributor, Allied Artists, does not seem to have extended itself in finding bookings.

*Crime and Punishment* was financed by several groups (including the Sanders); but *War Hunt* is being made through a straightforward two-picture deal with United Artists, who, in return for their money and a release agreement, require script approval and approval of budget allocations and of major casting. These are perfectly acceptable limitations for most people, who feel uncomfortable when not "protected" by some sort of name in the cast and who like to be told that their script is, within bounds, commercial. The Sanders like the arrangement because they take the time to find stories which both they and United Artists approve. They may like them for different reasons, they may not. But in any case each is satisfied; and we can imagine the Sanders continuing to make films under this sort of agreement, although not necessarily always in Hollywood.

*War Hunt* is "protected" by the presence of John Saxon in a starring role. His performance should establish him in many people's minds as a more considerable actor than they had thought possible. The Sanders are making an investment of a different kind in another young actor, Robert Redford, whom they have just signed to a five-picture contract. In the manner of their earlier arrangement with George Hamilton (starred in *Crime and Punishment*), they hope to establish a reputation for the young actor, then have at least a limited hold on him for five years, during which time they can decide whether to use him for their own films or "lend him out" to other companies. This, Terry Sanders is reported as having told *Variety*, puts new blood into the business. It also allows



"Night Tide": Marjorie Eaton and Dennis Hopper.

those responsible for the transfusion to benefit financially from any resulting successes.

*War Hunt* takes the Sanders one step closer to the Hollywood "frame" for a picture, without committing them to Hollywood's awful, deadening flatness. It is much more polished than their first feature and contains (in John Saxon's part) a much better performance. So, in studio terms, it is a much more reliable picture. The *longueurs* are less noticeable, and will probably be gone by the time the film is finally cut. Yet it has a point of view which is clearly its own.

Ray Endore (Saxon) plays an important role in his platoon. He volunteers for night patrol—every night. His reasons for doing this appear to be unorthodox. Roy Loomis, the newcomer (Robert Redford), catches a glimpse of him one night in the light of a flare, prancing around the form of a dead Chinese soldier, scrabbling in the earth like an animal after the kill. No one else sees this, and if they did they would not mention it: a man like Endore, for all his peculiarities, is too useful a soldier to question. Not surprisingly, the trouble begins when the cease fire comes. We then find that it is the constant strain of fighting (the "lunacy of the war situation," as Terry Sanders puts it) which keeps him sane, and contained. It is only with the orders to cease fire that he cracks. He crosses over, once again and against orders, into the no man's land between the lines, taking with him this time the young Korean boy whom he has befriended and made his charge. Loomis sees him go, and in the morning a group sets out in pursuit and finds him with the boy. In the ensuing scuffle Endore is shot by his commanding officer; and the boy flees, over the fields, into the protecting hills, off to an uncertain fate.

It is easy to be wise after the event with a story of this sort. The last cut of *War Hunt* which I was able to see, when it was being run for the composer, seemed still to move somewhat slowly towards what was the most interesting part of the film—the escape of Endore and the boy on the night of the cease fire. Hindsight suggests that this point could have been reached sooner, so that more time could have been spent with the dénouement. But as it is, the film-makers' point will be made. A distinction is made between moral and physical courage, between Loomis and Endore; and a dramatisation is offered



(a "proof" as Denis Sanders describes it) that war imposes insanity on the men engaged in it, or to put it another way, that war is a condition in which insanity becomes invisible precisely because it is a requirement of the condition.

## Curtis Harrington

FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW, Curtis Harrington has been working as a special assistant to Jerry Wald, first at Columbia and later at Fox. It was from this position that he took leave of absence recently to shoot his first feature, *Night Tide*, from his own script and with a smaller budget for the film than most experienced directors would consider necessary to shoot a single reel.

It is an interesting story, one that we could expect to have come from the author of so many, and such extremely personal, almost private, short experimental films, produced in Los Angeles, in London and in Venice over a period of years. It is set in Venice—Venice, California, a curiously decrepit suburb of Los Angeles which sprawls along the waterfront, surrounded by oil-wells and Santa Monica. It is, in part, absurdly grand—miniature canals without water, but with footbridges arching over them. It is also quite run down. All of this is captured by Harrington's camera (we had been there before, but with not quite so much detail, in *Crime and Punishment, U.S.A.*). It provides a splendid setting for a tale of mystery and (some) suspense.

Dennis Hopper appears as a somewhat simple young sailor, an easy prey for a lonely, attractive girl like Mora (Linda Lawson), who, in between solitary walks on the beach and visits to jazz cellars, is employed as a mermaid at an amusement park. Her employer is also her guardian, a retired and garrulous English sea captain living in a large and somewhat mysterious house, who hastens to inform the young sailor of the girl's strangeness. The sailor hears this from all sides, and from the girl herself. She believes herself to be descended from an ancient race of sea people, the sirens of Greek legend, who themselves belong to the sea and who lure sailors into it to their destruction. Both of her boy friends, it is disclosed, were drowned in mysterious circumstances.

This is good material for a spooker, but unfortunately Harrington approaches his story head on, through dialogue rather than situation, though without having sufficient dialogue on which to hang his characterisations. Whenever he is dealing with a scene which contains usable physical elements (as in a chase sequence, or an episode in which the girl is almost drowned under a pier), he is more at ease; and in those few scenes when he permits himself to return to the territory of his experimental shorts, as in the captain's house, he keeps us continually on edge, and at that proper distance necessary for mystery and melodrama. Elsewhere, during the exposition and dialogue scenes, we are too aware of the *longueurs*. In the second half of the film, when all the ingredients have been introduced (including a marvellous Woman in Black who appears from time to time to frighten the girl), these pauses and slow passages are intentional; earlier in the film they act to everyone's discredit. Fortunately Harrington is aware of this and plans to eliminate them as soon as he can get the time (and the money) to make the changes. What is now a 90 minute picture might easily come down to 70 minutes. And in general, in the case of a first feature, it is essential that a director have the opportunity to reconsider before having his film thrown out to the critics, who are only too likely to be looking for the wrong things.

## Irvin Kershner and others

OF THE REST, LITTLE CAN be said at the moment. Perhaps the best of them is Irv Kershner, who is gravely dissatisfied with the final version of *Hoodlum Priest*. Most of the last forty-five minutes of the film was created by him on the set, without benefit of script; a love interest was reportedly not

included in Kershner's first cut; and there was less emphasis on the preaching. Kershner now puts faith in becoming his own producer, and has just bought I.B. Singer's Yiddish novel *The Magician of Lublin*, which he hopes to shoot this year in Poland. Singer's hero, according to Kershner, "is a Houdini-like character in turn-of-the-century Poland who goes to Warsaw to make a name for himself as a magician, while in his private life he acts as a twentieth century sceptic. He is in fact a simple man, trying to find himself, and in the end he is betrayed by his conscience, a relic of the past which he cannot leave behind. It is easier to tell a story of a man of this sort if it has some historical perspective . . ." Kershner's formula for film-making is simple; and, given the chance, he should prove that in the right hands it is effective. "It is important only to know your craft; to feel strongly about the project in hand; and to be given the freedom to make it."

At the other end of the line is Tom Laughlin. He is learning his craft; he feels strongly; and he has somehow found the freedom to make his films—first *The Proper Time* and now the first part of a promised trilogy, *Like Father, Like Son*. This is probably the worst film of the year, and also the most sincere. But in this case sincerity is not enough; nor is the attempt, rare in his generation in Hollywood, to return to his childhood for inspiration. In the end it defeats him because he has, as yet, insufficient understanding of it. His film is packed with minutiae which are only too obviously authentic. But they are presented without perspective, without humour, and without much grace.

In between Kershner and Laughlin are the dozens of younger directors, writers and others working in cutting rooms, story departments and studio offices, in any of whom there might be a film to make us all sit up and stare. We can only hope so, because the work which *does* come out of Hollywood still leaves us waiting, looking for a national cinema, a cinema of our generation.

Keir Dullea, the young delinquent, and Don Murray, the Jesuit priest, in the execution scene from Irvin Kershner's "*Hoodlum Priest*".







# THE MISFITS

ARLENE CROCE

A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF *The Misfits*, if someone were to ask you for one, fast, would be that it is a modern version of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears", with more screaming. It takes a little longer to be fair, however. *The Misfits* is really an Arthur Miller play written specifically for Marilyn Monroe, theoretically for the movies, and presumably for an audience. That audience, in turn, may be thought of as the one Miller habitually writes for, a greying mass of nail-biters to whom words like "personal adjustment," "conformism," and "communication" sum up the entire burden the human conscience has to bear in mid-century America.

Like most of Miller's plays, *The Misfits* contains an analysis of the social structure that is as weepy as it is fundamentally correct. It's true—as Paul Goodman, for one, has pointed out—that society no longer provides many jobs that are both useful and honourable, and that many of the jobs it does provide are actively degrading. Miller doesn't misrepresent the facts, only the degree and quality of poignance that should be assigned to them. As for those who are gratified to find an American film that has anything at all to say about the social structure, let them first consider to what extent Miller's analysis is qualified by his emotion, and then to what extent his emotion is qualified by his sentimentality, and then finally, if it is necessary to go this far, consider whether it isn't just an easy process of demoralisation that is reflected in Miller's whole revolt, rather than a just criticism of society and its values. Still, the danger remains that the mystical-ethical-sexual solution (if it is a solution) Miller finds for his characters (if they are characters) will touch a lot of uncritical and self-accusing hearts that have grown used to the "truth" of an America where men will be boys and women hysterics.

*The Misfits* is nothing if not ambitious, and Miller's primary purpose is to show the way it really is between real men and women in America today. To contemplate his ponderings on this vast subject is to be engulfed by a farrago of abstractions—ignoble, treacherous, illusory and stale, and of no use to

either men or women. The net effect of the film is not the signal to despair—it isn't worth despair. It is the signal to begin again to wonder why it is, with all the best intentions in the world, Americans produce so little dramatic art that can conscientiously address itself to adults. It is not the dramatic arts alone (i.e. plays, lyric theatre, most films) that suffer from this weakness, but they suffer most. The modern American theatre has produced only three figures of creative genius—Eugene O'Neill, Robert Edmond Jones and Martha Graham—whom one could grow up to. In Kazan, Robbins, Bernstein, Williams—to take only those who at present might, could, or would, be "great"—we can enjoy good bones, plenty of hot technique, and a level of experience frozen forever, it would seem, at the mental age of seventeen. Play out the line of talent a bit more, and one comes to Arthur Miller. Miller's callowness in *The Misfits* is either the more or the less to be forgiven because he has initially understood callowness as part of his subject. This depends upon whether one is willing to take the thought—nay, the inkling—for the deed. To do so, perhaps, would be to do his film the justice of regarding it as the act of therapy it is; and it would be to accept stones for bread, even in the midst of this yeasty famine. Miller's functionalistic concept of art condemns him to be taken seriously in terms of his objective purpose. But when his terms are as limp and vulgar as they are here, one resigns all hope not merely of the target ever being struck but of it ever being sighted.

Miller's screenplay is an allegory of the no-longer-wild-West. His setting for the action is Reno, plus the outlying hills and flats of Nevada. It is a setting of such unchallengeably self-evident, almost glib, contrasts that one knows right away the theme is to be *Our Lost Innocence*. But one grants Miller the power of the locale and its full symbolic value. This theme, however, grows increasingly factitious as bit by bit Miller builds up biographies for his three male protagonists and the

Above: the mustang round-up in "The Misfits".



one woman who is their collective foil. Miller's three men (described as "the last real men on earth, and" [for a woman's purposes] "as unreliable as jack-rabbits") are a debonairly ageing cowhand named Gay (short for Gable, another self-evident symbol); a soured little pilot and auto mechanic named Guido, whose masculine self-esteem, like that of a Norman Mailer hero, seems to have been entirely conditioned by combat missions in World War II; and an Oedipally obsessed young rodeo rider named Perce, who can't communicate.

Nobody can communicate (Miller calls it "saying 'Hello' ") except when drunk, and then only incoherently. The three parts have been clearly typed as modern variants of the progressive degeneration of a species—an exposé, almost, of the Westerner as folk hero. Only Gay remains as the last of the authentic breed, but he is also the ineffectual father, stripped of respectability and the love of his children by divorce. Guido, the creature of World War II, is the ordinary man who chooses the West as a means of opting out of the economic dilemma. He, too, is an example of frustrated domesticity, as shown by his dead wife and unfinished house. Similarly with Perce, the mixed-up adolescent, cheated out of his patrimony by his mother's remarriage. For them all the West is the last outpost of freedom in an over-organised society, where a version of what Goodman has called "manly work" is still legally available for the risking. The returns are small, and what's legal may not look very nice to the thin-skinned sort, but hell, "anything's better'n wages." Not for long, however, can Gay, Guido and Perce escape the knowledge that even the last frontier has gone, quite literally, to the dogs. In the old days you rounded up wild mustangs for children to have as pets; now they go for four cents a pound to the dogfood dealers. It was from this core of irony that Miller extracted a certain amount of sincere dramatic pathos, enough for a good film, in his first version of *The Misfits*, published as a short story in 1957. Just as in every big fat three-hour Hollywood film there is a trim little ninety-minute one crying to get out, somewhere in the expanse of the film that was produced there exists proper material for the dry, hard-swallowing, mutely effective kind of movie John Huston used to make. With the three characters presented as straight vocational studies and not as type-specimens out of a casebook, and with an unstressed symbolic unity of horses and men, we might have had a good film about the decline of mustanging. Miller, however, must wade into waters deeper than this, and his portentous symbolicising of everyone and everything in sight is nowhere more grotesque than in his introduction of Miss Marilyn Monroe as the agent of a feminist ethic of conversion.

In all her exploited career Miss Monroe has never made a stranger appearance than she does here, in a role that gives every indication of having been written for, about, and even by, her. She is cast as Roslyn Taber, a forlorn little night club *artiste* in the penultimate stage of mental torture, who has come out to Reno for a divorce. She, too, has suffered from lack of communication: indifferent parents, a husband who "was never there". But she is also something of an intuitive genius with an innate sympathy for the sufferings of others, instinctively recoiling from the bad in them or bringing out the good. She is *simpatico*, in fact, to the point of subversion, and it is she who reveals to the three last men on earth that their frontierism is really self-destruction, that killing horses is wrong, that they must change their lives. This is the price of communication at last. With Roslyn it all, for the first time, "lights up". Roslyn-Marilyn and Gay-Gable, in a great binding of male and female essences, are united. At the fadeout they are both heading into a starlit, and conceivably vegetarian, future.

It is quite beside the point to dwell on how Marilyn Monroe "acts" this part. She is not called upon to act at all. If the parts of Gay, Guido and Perce are made-to-order sociological types,

the part of Roslyn is what might be called characterisation by attribution. "You have finally come in contact with a real woman," Gay is told. And Roslyn herself is repeatedly complimented: "When you smile it's like the sun coming up"; "You got respect for a man"; "You got the gift of life in you, Roslyn"; or, more to the point, "You say the strangest things." Roslyn, however, says nothing that Hollywood in its infinite idealism cannot understand. She is admiringly spoken of in the film as being "brand new", which is a pretty steeply contrived euphemism for "born yesterday". In so far as she stands at the centre of Miller's schematic world, she represents a moral simplism that is the very coin of current usage. Anything's better than wages, but communication is better than anything. Believing in dybbuks is better than believing in nothing. Be a *mensch*. These null affirmations are notable, not only because they evade contextual issues, but because they lack true pride of sentiment. They are like toasts proposed by a frightened drunk. What is it exactly that is being communicated? Is it that "gift of life"?

Miller is apparently persuaded that the death-wish is so strong among us we have to be told to live. He presents Roslyn as an image of feminine soul force, a light before men. Only Guido resists her influence in a last-ditch stand against "wages". But unlike the other two "dead men", Gay and Perce, Guido can never be reborn. Guido finds buzzing panicked mustangs in his little plane almost as thrilling as dropping bombs from his B-17. For this he is told off ("excommunicated"?) by Roslyn, the truth-speaker: "You like to kill! You really like it!" Interestingly, Guido is the only one of the three men to express carnal desire for Roslyn. To Perce she is Gay's girl, but to Guido she is the girl Gay stole. Gay's attitude toward Roslyn is courtly, in the Western style. Although he and Roslyn become lovers early on, there is no seduction—just a long drunken bout, followed (though here the editing is ambiguous) by a long sleep, followed by breakfast. There are no love scenes in the film. Obviously, Roslyn will be had on her own, or Miller's terms, or not at all. Guido's implied unworthiness of Roslyn is part of Miller's whole laborious campaign in this film to exorcise the demon. Her occupancy—with Gay—of Guido's cottage, the planting of flowers, the little domestic arrangements, the refusal to let Gay shoot the rabbit that raids the lettuce patch, the emotion over



Marilyn Monroe and Montgomery Clift.



the horses, all bring Life to the desert. Roslyn stands four-square against the death-wish, and let's drink to it. Miller's insistence on Life has the table-banging desperation of liberal evangelism down to its last Big Idea. The tone of desperation is clear in his own statement of his aims as a dramatist: "I am simply asking for a theatre in which an adult who wants to live can find plays that will heighten his awareness of what living in our time involves." But Miller is able to tell us only that living in our time involves the need to live.

It has become a commonplace to say of John Huston that the bigger the subject the harder he falls. In this case he falls only from the bottom step. He has let Miller have the show. Whether because of Miller's reputation, or because of the manifest hopelessness of the whole project, his direction seems curiously daunted. He does not make very much of Reno or the rodeo, there are no faces in the crowd except those belonging to Kevin McCarthy, James Barton and Estelle Winwood in three completely expendable "guest" appearances. Miller's script gives Huston one good chance at an old specialty in the long mustanging sequence, and Huston films it like an old specialty—taut, exciting, beautifully set up and built. Purely as an exercise in tactical virtuosity, it is one of the best things Huston has ever done, and Gable and the stallion are an improvement on Gregory Peck and the white whale. Huston's technical style still has its improvisational sheen, but one device is beginning to wear, and that is his preference for goldfish-bowl group framing as a substitute for reaction shots. It has now become a means of avoiding dramatic selection; the camera collects vacuity while the talk runs on.

But if one aesthetic offense could be singled out of the entire production, it would be that talk. Miller's dialogue—diction, really—is composed in that style of literary burlap that is supposed to convey profound simplicity, or simple profundity. The man who once described the Salesman as "way out there in the blue riding on a smile and a shoeshine" now has the frustrated pilot say, "I can't get off the ground and I can't get up to God." Eli Wallach speaks this line and plays his whole role with an inordinate amount of Methodical concentration. Montgomery Clift is too old and too intelligent for Perce, but he looks, acts and moves like a rodeo rider. Thelma Ritter appears long enough to present her credentials as Miller's mouthpiece and scene-setter, and then retires. Clark Gable's last appearance is also his best in years. His imperial glints of amusement in his scenes with Monroe make the verbiage much easier to take, and one little but perfectly calculated shot of him carrying two heavy cinder blocks for her to use as a doorstep seems touchingly to appreciate his mastery.

There remains, there will always remain, Marilyn Monroe. Who or what is Marilyn Monroe? The world has been led to think of her as Circe. Miller plainly sees her as Penelope, with some of the activist spunk of a Lysistrata. It is perhaps worth recalling that John Huston was once signed to direct her as Lysistrata in a television debut that never came off. Here, his direction of her is liable to turn up some Aristophanic flashes which peculiarly blur Miller's more spiritual conception. In some more enlightened day, someone will cast her accurately, as Delilah. With what lamblike efficiency could she then wreak her proper vengeance on the long-hairs.

## FILM REVIEWS

### ONE EYED JACKS

IT SEEMS YEARS since Marlon Brando's *One Eyed Jacks* (Paramount) first went into production. Stanley Kubrick was to direct it, and *Spartacus* and *Lolita* have been made in the interval; there were reports of a rough-cut running to five hours; pauses while the director took time off to act in other films; stories of re-shooting, re-editing, a revised ending. And, after all this, there is something massive about the film. It is extravagant and original, exorbitant and absurd, a show-case constructed not so much around Brando's talent as an actor, since he has given better and truer performances, but around his temperament.

Brando is a romantic actor with the manner and training of a realist. Beneath the mumbling delivery, the sense of a performer worrying at words to extract some ultimate, unrevealed meaning, beneath the effortless contemporaneity which allowed him to speak for his generation in films like *The Wild One* and *On the Waterfront*, one has also the sense of a West Coast Heathcliff struggling to get out. And in *One Eyed Jacks* he has got out. This is a performance of monumental abstraction, in which the actor always seems to have his back against the wall, to be sitting in a corner, wrapped in a heavy cape, gazing into space. Although the film is his, he has as it were withdrawn from it into these stormy meditations; and while he deliberates, events must wait for him. It all has, too, that broad streak of masochism which so often goes with a romantic desperation. Rio, the bandit hero of *One Eyed Jacks*, has robbed a few banks in his time. But a prison sentence—he is only captured as the result of an act of treachery—has served to expiate these crimes. For the

greater part of the film, Rio suffers in silence. He is betrayed again by his former partner and mentor, now a respectable lawman. (This character, played by Karl Malden, is nicknamed Dad: Freudians are left to draw their own conclusions.) He is tricked by his new partners; he is caged and whipped and spat on; his gun hand is brutally smashed; and he reacts to all this with the lowered head and savage glare of a bull in the arena. His only allies are a Mexican Indian, cheerfully matter-of-fact, an old chess-playing Chinese fisherman, and Dad's Mexican step-daughter, who in the end is instrumental in rescuing him from the gallows.

As it must, the film takes its tone and tempo from this central performance. It is slow and sulky, hazy rather than clear-cut, thunderously oppressive rather than vigorous. The point it reaches after finds expression in the title. Men, like playing cards, like the bar-room Mona Lisa with the ace of hearts in her hand, wear two faces. The honest sheriff, respected for his firm discipline, was once a bank robber and remains a traitor to friendship; the bandit will turn from vengeance and deceit to truth and love, but will still be trapped by other men's treachery; his fellow thieves will become his new betrayers. The screenplay, by Guy Trosper and Calder Willingham, though strongly influenced one imagines by Brando himself, strains to lift its episodes to the pitch of epic encounters. Into the prolonged struggle between Dad and Rio are fitted most of the classic Western incidents: the bank robbery and chase across the waste land; the stranger riding up to the lonely ranch; the posse and the threat of a lynching; the gun duel in the town square. As in a Jacobean tragedy of pride and revenge, these ritual happenings are to serve high romantic ends; but it needs a torrent of poetry to carry them along, and it is in a poetry to match its ambitions that *One Eyed Jacks* is deficient.

Brando's cameraman, Charles Lang, has risen magnificently to the occasion. The exterior photography, in particular, is as genuinely romantic, as charged, as the film in its entirety would like to be. Its pattern is broken by some awkward intrusions of close-ups, clumsy reminders that the film's failure is one of scale and balance. This must be the only Western—certainly the only Western one can remember—to be set largely on the sea coast. It's against a background of waves crashing against a rocky shore that the bandits quarrel and plot and ride out to rob a bank. Characteristic, both in its visual beauty and in the high self-consciousness of its imagery, is the scene in which the girl (played with spirit by Pina Pellicer) rides out to visit Rio. The bandit, flexing his injured gun hand in a series of small, agonised movements, is testing out his speed on the



draw; a solitary, angry figure among the rocks. Louisa, cloaked and hooded, rides up like some idealised nineteenth-century heroine, a Diana Vernon of the South West.

How much, one feels, Brando enjoys striking attitudes; and how much the striking of attitudes has spilt over into his direction. The drive and authority of the film at its best are continually being compromised by the overbearing extravagance of the film at its worst. That opening fight with the *rurales*, when a sandstorm obscures the advancing men, guns flash through the murk, and the hunched, squatting Rio raises his hands in surrender, has a grandeur of scale. But when Karl Malden's snarling sheriff whips Brando in the town square or rounds on his patiently obstinate wife (Katy Jurado), when the jailer (Slim Pickens) humiliates his prisoner, when the heroine comes to the rescue with an empty pistol concealed in a dish of food, we are not in the legendary West where the film should belong but in a picture taking itself with unwarranted solemnity. Such repeated images of melancholy and violence, so many cloaked figures, lone riders, sad silhouettes, take on the luxuriance of grand opera without the operatic justification.

The romantic Western has been losing ground to the Freudian Western; and if Brando's temperament seems primarily that of a romantic, there are also other things that he wants to say. But the two schools cannot be so easily reconciled: the broad outlines of the legend war with the rudimentary psychological interpretations. The satisfactions of *One Eyed Jacks* lie in watching an artist of this calibre at work, the display of that quintessential actor's egotism which admits of no limits to what the player, merely through his presence, can communicate. He is simply there; and so, in all its arrogance, is his bank robber's adventure.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

## THE CONNECTION

"THERE'S NOTHING GOING ON visually," says one of the characters in *The Connection*; at which another actor picks up a hoop and slyly makes some patterns for the camera. Jack Gelber's cool-eyed play about a group of heroin addicts who are waiting for a fix, in the meantime amusedly indulging the presence of a film unit, is characteristically derisive about the way cinema people go on about "images". Anyone who suggests that Shirley Clarke has "translated the play into cinematic terms" should feel the hipsters' breath on his neck. All the same, it has to be said: *The Connection* (Contemporary) is one of the rare stage pieces that is improved in its screen version.

This often means, as the junkies beadily note, nothing more than that the director has been visually flashy, eliminated the lines that can be better expressed in the cinema by the way someone shrugs or behaves when he is alone, and perhaps realised the potentialities of film to the extent of adding a car crash to the action. Shirley Clarke, the young American who made *The Connection*, has done something more crucial: though she adheres closely to the original text and never stirs outside the junkies' pad, she has altered the relation of the audience to what is going on, which in *The Connection* is peculiarly important.

In the stage version, the play hangs on the Pirandellian device of an "author" who is planted in the audience, complaining intermittently that his work is being ruined by junkie actors. The pretence of real life intervening has the effect of underlining the opposite and reminding one that one is in a theatre, and the voice from the stalls chiefly makes the spectators unfruitfully self-conscious. In Gelber's screenplay the character of the author is eliminated: part of his function is appropriated by the "director", Jim Dunn, but because he is on the screen with the others he is absorbed into the fiction. The opposition is no longer between actors and author, pretending to be sparring at a rehearsal, but between actors and spectators, which is what Gelber always intended. In the theatre the paralysing question was whether the author's complaints were right, and whether the simulated improvising of the actors was indeed as boring as he said it was; in the cinema the correct, discomfiting question becomes one about our own motives in wanting to spy on drug addicts. In the theatre the audience often felt embarrassed; in the cinema it feels accused.

This is partly due to the rewriting, but mostly to Shirley Clarke's brilliant insistence that the camera is the instrument of our own curiosity. In most films the camera has no identity: it is simply a conveniently agile window through which one can stare without being seen, and one questions its superhuman perceptiveness no



"One Eyed Jacks": Marlon Brando and Pina Pellicer.

more than one questions the fact that a novelist has such an unlikely nose for being in the right place at the right time. In *The Connection*, on the other hand, the camera is always a palpable object. The junkies glare at it, are amused by it and turn away from the lights as blindly as they do from the director's questions. Apart from the sequences when the shooting is taken over by Jim Dunn with a hand-held camera, the operator is an unseen but powerful presence, occasionally speaking monosyllabically from behind the camera and always severely doubtful of his boss's propriety in thinking to make art of such sorry goings-on. The spectator's identification with this character, called J. J. Burden—a variant on Jaybird, the author-character of the stage version—becomes, in time, complete and perturbing, for his silences emit a pretty square and unbudging personality.

After films like *Hiroshima, mon Amour*, and *Moderato Cantabile*, and *Une Aussi Longue Absence*, we have grown used to the notion that films can be driven forward not by a plot but simply by the way the characters react upon one another. *The Connection* goes further: not only is it without action, but it is also very nearly without interaction, for like all addicts the characters are effectively sealed off from human communication. Their talk is idle self-colloquy: they expect nothing of one another, do only what is absolutely necessary, and would scorn, as true hipsters, the idea of selling themselves as characters or even justifying their addiction. "That's the way it is. Man, that's the way it really is," becomes a recurring phrase in the play; and apart from some desultory speculation about why heroin should have been made illegal, they ask no questions. ("Maybe popular opinion. Maybe the liquor lobby. To protect people from themselves . . ." "Man, they got a bomb, haven't they, to protect us from ourselves?") *The Connection* is a study of men with scepticism but no curiosity, great insight coupled with total inertia: they are, in the most precise sense, anti-social.

In a film of minute and flawless naturalism, the one unaccountable failure of documentary truth is the absence, while we are looking at the room through Jim Dunn's swinging lens, of the other camera and the stolid J. J. With one exception, actors and jazz musicians all played in the off-Broadway or London productions, or both: the newcomer is William Redfield as Jim Dunn, a dapper,





"The Connection": Jim Anderson, Jackie McLean and Larry Ritchie.

nervy intruder with the most convincing stammer I have heard since Anthony Perkins' in *Psycho*. Negotiating anxiously between the junkies and the cameraman, who constantly threatens the cool mood with his moral silences, the director finally falls in with the hipsters and has a fix himself, partly out of an edgy wish to be part of the gang, and partly because he is genuinely bothered about the frivolity of his outsider's view. "There's something dirty about just—peeking—into people's lives?" he hisses agonised at the cameraman, looking for a denial. After his fix he uses the hand-held camera for a while, staring glazed at chance objects like a door-handle or a crawling fly, and one is forced into an unnerving participation in the stupid sensibility of the drugged. Not that the camerawork has ever been exactly agitated, even in the hands of the far from high J. J. Burden. The takes are long and unfussed, and often stray away from the sound or fail to cut to a speaker at all. The amount of dialogue that is played in front of the camera, in fact, represents very much the proportion of time that one would spend gazing at the face of a member of one's own household if one were in the same room with him for two hours.

One can pick a few holes in the play, particularly for its unremitting scorn of its characters, and its respect for a coolness that is sometimes downright moribundity. There are moments, too, when *The Connection* romanticises the anti-romantic. Against this one has to put an admirably unsensational attitude to dope, a matching refusal to supply theatrical kicks, an impeccable ear for the hipster's *patois*, and a black, abrupt humour. For Shirley Clarke's direction there can be nothing but praise: with *Shadows*, this is a film with more creative flair than any that has come out of America for years.

PENELOPE GILLIATT

## THREE DIRECTORS AND A THEME

TIME WAS WHEN WE LONGED for a more youthful, believable approach in films about juvenile delinquency. Either we got an impression of box-office flirtation, of conscience clouded by middle-aged hysteria; or of a multifarious selection of special cases owing more to the sociological digest than to first-hand observation. Much of that is changed now. Impecunious tiros like Irvin Kershner, denied studio facilities, gave us recognisable city surfaces and states of adolescent mind. A young, much-touted TV director like John Frankenheimer was applauded for the quiet intensity and intimacy, the almost microcosmic scaling-down of a notoriously unwieldy theme, in *The Young Stranger*. Presumably these were the qualities which prompted producers Harold Hecht and Burt Lancaster to

reclaim Frankenheimer from a hectic, self-imposed four-year exile in TV. At any rate, whatever the faults of Frankenheimer's *The Young Savages* (United Artists), neglect of the *genius loci* isn't one of them. The reality of the garbage-strewn streets, the tenements, the distinctive uniforms and hair-styles of rival gangs in a "turf" like Spanish Harlem has rarely seemed so pervasive.

But one has long ceased to wonder at the disadvantages in the verisimilar approach. And here, except that the details of gang warfare aren't impermissibly emphasised, the dangers are in full array. The script not only contorts itself in accommodating ingenious twists and comments on just about every conceivable side-issue including the H-bomb: it positively dislocates itself in its determination to view the responsibility for the death of a blind Puerto Rican boy, and the compulsions driving his three switch-blade assassins, from as many points of view as the film has *genre* characters. Thus we get the D.A. with gubernatorial ambitions; the 16-year-old prostitute; the victim's statuesque, black-garbed mother; the cynical journalist; the investigator's ex-girl friend, mother of one of the defendants, who has learnt about environmental influences from life; the investigator's smugly liberal graduate wife, who has learnt it all from text-books; and the slum-born investigator himself (Burt Lancaster in Glenn Ford's usual role), who begins by seeking the death penalty, goes on to doubt his own instincts after trying to throttle a chain-wielding yob, and ends by taking over the defence. This chaotic mass of truisms has reduced its director to what one can only assume is severe anxiety state. Punctuated by a monotony of shock-cuts, his subjective camera swerves, tilts, zeroes in and retreats to the inevitable long-shot of three figures scampering across a rubbish dump; the sound-track crackles, the images are, *de rigueur*, grainy, the music thrusts with atonal yelps. Apart from a crib from Hitchcock, when the stabbing is seen in close-up in the reflection of the victim's dark glasses, and a TV-taut but *Boomerang*-contrived court scene, there is nothing in the film to distinguish Frankenheimer from any Kazan mimic. A promising young director's gifts have been turned inside-out; and one hopes his employers' self-esteem has been satisfied in the process.

The flaws in Kershner's *The Hoodlum Priest* (United Artists), while no less apparent, no less attributable to the current producer-star mania for sermons spelt out like sky-writing, are considerably more forgivable. Ostensibly a routine, low-budget, location-shot tribute to a St. Louis Jesuit, Charles Dismas Clark, who for 25 years has served as the friend and confessor of convicts, the film generates both sympathy and concern. The story is developed crudely, sentimentally and in terms of the usual loaded clichés (another jaundiced newspaperman) through the priest's efforts to divert a youngster from a life of crime, and finally from the gas chamber. With all its faults, though, this simplified approach remains dramatically tougher than that of *The Young Savages*, eventually crystallising the priest's uncompromising dedication to the boy in one of those fool-proof police sieges, all rifles, tear-gas and mad-eyed terror, which have given audiences a vague thrill of guilt ever since *Angels With Dirty Faces*. It proceeds to attack capital punishment with a sobriety and economy of visual means far more effective than Susan Hayward's Award-winning death-cell agonies. Here Keir Dullea's honestly incredulous performance as the condemned boy, and Don Murray's well-meaning if previously too adulatory impersonation of the priest, interfuse and mutually identify with the spectator's reactions (neatly pointed in glimpses of gaunt, anonymous faces peering into the death chamber) to provide a climactic act of audience participation in the facts of legal murder. Kershner's direction, despite chunks of Father-knows-best dialogue written pseudonymously by Murray himself, manages to advance much of the story without aid of speech. Whole passages and transitions are manipulated in elliptical, silent style, arguing an assurance extended since *Stakeout on Dope Street* and *The Young Captives*.

The pre-eminence of a recent Italian film on the same subject, Franco Rossi's *Death of a Friend* (Gala), is in some ways surprising. Its ingredients—pimps in sun-glasses jockeying motor-scooters, pavements-full of bangled prostitutes—could hardly be more familiar. Nor is there much to choose between the Frankenheimers and their Italian colleagues when it comes to directors insisting on audiences knowing who's in command of the camera. But Rossi begins with two advantages: freedom from that current compulsion to explicate themselves and their themes *ad nauseam* common to American actor-producers—his film in fact has no star names; and an incisive, witty, yet unassuming eye for real backgrounds and people (Didi Perego gives a splendid performance of insolent sensuality as one of the prostitutes) closer to our own Karel Reisz than anyone.

Like Kershner, Rossi has brought his subject down to a



deliberately simplified, schematic relationship: two boys, opposites in colouring, temperament and family circumstances, bound by illogical affection, the one influencing the other and his way of life. The playing, with Spiros Focas easily and sardonically ascendant over a likeably inhibited Gianni Garko, pays tribute to Rossi's sensibility and insight. That the film, for all its truth, cannot ultimately succeed in transcending its convention is betrayed by the ending—that hoary Carné finale of robbery, car chase and vigil-beside-the-body-through-the-night. Vicious heroes, like young directors, demand reasonably cool appraisal. The first can be made affecting, as two of these three films under review show. But the second, whatever their promise, cannot be allowed to get away with the sort of rueful, damp-eyed complicity for which we were not so long ago trouncing their elders. Still, Rossi will make a mature personal film one day.

PETER JOHN DYER

## EXODUS and THE GUNS OF NAVARONE

A FEW YEARS AGO, the very long and expensive film was usually a Biblical subject, probably produced by Cecil B. de Mille. Nowadays, when audiences are prepared to settle down for a long evening with one film only, the super-production attracts a wider range of talent (Kubrick, Vidor, Nicholas Ray) and has built up its own set of rules. With such an enormous financial outlay, these films also need a special kind of guarantee in box-office returns. Accordingly, the director's position has become peculiarly perilous; some succeed in retaining their individuality, others become lost in a jungle of accounting and difficult locations. In the words of one Hollywood director, they feel themselves assisting at the birth not of a film, but of a large, top-heavy celluloid ship. The two films reviewed here total over six hours running time, cost £4 million between them, and are inspired by that box-office certainty: war. Though dissimilar in method and quality, both reflect the problems involved in this kind of marathon undertaking.

Among the difficulties to be faced in adapting a vastly debatable book such as Leon Uris's *Exodus* (United Artists), simplification and reduction were clearly obligatory. Dalton Trumbo's script, however, not only simplifies the original but most of its accompanying implications as well. Direct accusations are as far as possible avoided, for this is a film which tries to be fair (for box-office reasons as well as political ones) to all concerned. The intransigence of the British authorities in Cyprus during the post-war Palestinian crisis is symbolised in the person of an anti-Jewish officer (slightly overdone by Peter Lawford); but as the British commander is played by such an obviously humane figure as Ralph Richardson, the balance is more than restored. The Arab viewpoint is represented mainly through a few comforting phrases given to a friendly Mukhtar (a thinly disguised John Derek); only after partition has been declared do the Arabs assume a major role when, led by a sinister Nazi officer, they become the equivalent of the marauding Indians in a Western. But this is essentially a Jewish story, and naturally it presents a nationalist case in which the end, presumably, justifies the means. And yet, having presented the case for both violent and non-violent action, the film tries to have it both ways. The Irgun decision to blow up the King David Hotel is discussed, but the results are never shown; the moral implications of this and other acts are soon lost in the confusion of action which comprises the film's second half. For the first two hours, however, we see a fierce conflict whittled down to a kid-gloved sparring match, with handsome Jewish patriots confronting urbane British officials.

Faced with such daunting shortcomings, how can this 3½ hour film survive? The answer can be found in the best parts of Trumbo's script and in the all-embracing control of Otto Preminger's direction. *Exodus* has the negative virtue of avoiding the kind of crass vulgarity which would have been insufferable in such a subject. In this respect, Trumbo's adaptation is at its best when isolating a single event or presenting a simple glossary of attitudes. The interrogation of the young would-be terrorist by the Irgun leader (an excellent performance by David Opatoshu) is a useful example. Sharply written and disturbing in its final revelation, this episode has a feeling of hard reality which even theatrical lighting cannot dispel. Although the characters are conceived mainly as spokesmen for points of view, Preminger gives them a consistent life of their own. Both Paul Newman, as the Haganah hero, and Eva Marie Saint, as the American nurse who becomes involved in the conflict, play with unusual relaxation and intimacy; and the one wholly



"Death of a Friend": Gianni Garko, Spiros Focas and Didi Perego.

inadequate performance—Jill Haworth's young refugee—is a piece of beginner's bad luck.

What of Preminger's celebrated *mise en scène*? Like other Hollywood film-makers of his generation, Preminger has an instinctive feeling for the revealing camera set-up. There is scarcely an image in this film which is allowed to become dead or meaningless. At the same time, ostentation is avoided; many scenes are allowed to continue in static set-ups for quite a long time, and when movement arrives, it is sudden, sharp and highly organised. The colour photography of Sam Leavitt is not only his best work for many years, but hints at a keen intelligence behind the use and deployment of colours. Preminger and Leavitt achieve great variety by contrasting the hot Eastern whites and yellows with dark figures and dark interiors; and the prison escape sequence (brilliantly cut by Louis Loeffler) is an outstanding piece of stage-management.

*Exodus*, then, sees Preminger's sheer movie-making talent at its most extended. Unhappily, the ability to sustain a large canvas does not necessarily result in a good film. As an artist, Preminger seems to require material which can be viewed with rigorous or ironic detachment. He can be warmed by an emotional outburst (some scenes on board the *Exodus* mix clichés with genuine fervour), but when an intimate response is called for, as in the meeting between the girl Karen and her war-shocked father, pity congeals into bathos. Again, at the very end, with the burying of the innocents and Newman's slightly sanctimonious oration, we are left with an emotional gesture, sincerely intended no doubt, which it remains hard to equate with the final shots of the Jewish trucks trundling off to yet another battle.

If *Exodus* belongs primarily to its director, one feels that *The Guns of Navarone* (Columbia) is mainly the conception of its producer and adaptor, Carl Foreman. Here is a plot which could have made an effective wartime adventure story, a little old-fashioned perhaps, yet sufficient for ninety minutes entertainment with a sure, swift forward drive towards its spectacular climax. Unhappily, elephantiasis has taken its toll. Filled out with dialogue exchanges about bravery, cowardice, and personal responsibility in action, the film laboriously tracks its little band of British saboteurs as they wander around pretty Greek locations, despatching both Germans and local traitors as they go. The emphasis laid on the characters' interior stresses suggests that this was the aspect of the story which mainly concerned its producer. But as these bouts of introspection are neither clarified or explored, their only effect is to inflate the narrative unreasonably. The actual action sequences might have served well enough had they been more expertly done. J. Lee Thompson's direction fails to quicken the pulse, however, except in a well constructed studio shipwreck, and he has encouraged Gregory Peck and David Niven to repeat their



well-worn portrayals of tight-lipped inflexibility and jaunty daredevilry. Above all, the film lacks a firm controlling hand which would have ironed out passages of incoherent editing and made the climax really tell. Whereas one is carried along by the mechanics of the *Exodus* prison break, by the time the attack on the Navarone guns is reached the film's volition is exhausted and one watches the operation with a kind of tired detachment.

Can a lesson be drawn from these two long and costly films? To a certain extent, both use the facts of war to weave a wilful romantic fiction around their protagonists. Following current practice, they encourage prestige through a readiness to examine serious themes—so long as they do not impair box-office potential. Here, perhaps, is a foretaste of the big commercial blockbuster of the 1960s: three hour marathons with a mild dose of "think" material at the beginning and some good rousing carnage towards the end. For obvious financial reasons, such films are unlikely to arrive in large numbers; and it seems reasonable to assume that they will not seriously disconcert the more intimate voices which are appearing in ever growing numbers in Europe, the East and America itself.

JOHN GILLET

## TWO DAUGHTERS

**TWO DAUGHTERS**—they were originally three, but one of them, alas, was dropped in transit to make a shorter film—is based on a couple of Tagore stories (*The Postmaster*, *Samapti*) and was made specifically for the centenary of this formidable *guru*. In describing them as nothing more than *divertimenti* to be enjoyed in the spirit of a Festival, Satyajit Ray has been too modest; for these short stories, though slight, are never trivial. They may be comedies—in every sense of the word—but, as in all good comedies, the richness of the humour depends on serious preoccupations. In the light of Ray's recurring themes, *Two Daughters* can be seen as an honourable development; a variation, perhaps, in a new and exquisite key.

Both stories employ similar devices. At first ostensibly about two cultured fellows placed in situations beyond their control, they soon turn out to be mainly concerned with the girls in the case, the girls with whom they are both, in different ways, horribly involved. In the first tale Mr. Nanda, a Calcutta poet paying his way as a postmaster, is transferred to a steaming outback depot—to what turns out to be his speedy detriment. Jungle life quickly wears him down. His nerves are shattered by the antics of a preying lunatic, by the music of local amateurs, and by a severe bout of malaria. Hastily he resigns from the postal service and returns to Calcutta; but in doing so he fails a little servant-girl whom he has been teaching the rudiments of writing. This orphan—the film's real protagonist—stands in for all the underprivileged in their hopeless bravery; and Nanda's betrayal of the girl's hopes (for it is no less) represents just as much the failure of the hypersensitive man to transform a desperate situation. This play of heroism against understandable cowardice is beautifully caught in the final scene, as Nanda slinks away from the depot. The girl passes him, and as he offers her a rupee she proudly ignores him. In long shot they turn and look back at each other—he dressed in city clothes,

she burdened by a huge pail of water. Then Nanda ambles on. By the side of the path the lunatic slumps stiffly.

This poignant affair surprisingly gives Ray a free hand for a most delicate humour, in which the incongruity of civilised man in far from civilised surroundings is exploited, with tact, to the full. Nanda's first encounter with the lunatic is hilarious, and his embarrassment at collapsing furniture, at the ceaseless drone of the musicians, could win the admiration of even M. Hulot. *The Postmaster* is a fine piece of work: if it weren't flawed by Ray's usual cliché of a storm at a moment of crisis, it would be a masterpiece.

*Samapti* is sharper and brisker; a comedy of love, in fact, conveyed in what is a generally taut narrative. Again we have the sensitive and scholarly hero: a young law student, home for the holidays, who is self-centred, vain and well-intentioned in much the same way as Mr. Nanda. His mother wants him to marry, and has indeed chosen a girl; but naturally he doesn't look at the matter in the same light. He tells her that he's attracted to a tomboy graced by the name of Puglee, and she is horrified. Puglee, she cries out, is a shrew, wild, impossible... The marriage, nevertheless, is arranged. The girl doesn't want to marry, but conventions in Bengal being what they are, she has to go through with it. Eventually, though, it is all too much for her; and on her wedding night she rebels. She refuses to sleep with her husband and slips out of the house into the dark, through fields to the river, to her childhood toys—to a squirrel in a cage, a ruined shrine, a swing. When the mother discovers that the marriage hasn't been consummated, a scandal of absurd proportions breaks out—she wails and slaps the girl, neighbours are delightedly shocked, and the ineffectual young man slips sadly into the garden. Puglee, in the meantime, is locked away in his room, where she responds by smashing up its contents.

From here on, Ray (and Tagore) could have developed the tale along the usual lines of tragedy or comedy, of *The Doll's House* or *The Taming of the Shrew*. The road they take, however, is not so straightforward. With subtle poise, never missing a step, they move the story along the most curious of paths to a satisfying conclusion. This balance is the making of *Samapti*: the droll waywardness of the formal tea party, reminiscent of Chekov at his best, could easily have run out of hand; and the pathos of Puglee's forced marriage could have likewise too easily turned into a lugubrious *drame à thèse*. Ray's resourcefulness is always matched by restraint.

The acting, too, is masterly. Aparna das Gupta, as Puglee, has wit, range and a glowing, mercurial beauty. Soumitra Chatterji, who played Apu in the third part of the trilogy, here shows a dab hand at characterisation: his scholar is all elbows and spectacles, a rare little portrait of amiable vanity. And around them the mother and neighbours frolic, as scatter-brained and real a company as one could hope for. *Samapti* makes a delightful and appropriate conclusion to a film which deserves the widest circulation.

ERIC RHODE

## THE LOVE TRAP

**JEAN-PIERRE MOCKY'S** THEME in *The Love Trap* (*Un Couple*: Unifilms) is wistful rather than tragic. It concerns two lovers, *jeunes mariés*, who come to realise that their love is dying. The husband first brings the subject into the open while the couple are visiting a museum where they originally met. The wife's immediate reactions are resentful and suspicious. She pretends to suspect another woman. But she herself ultimately admits that she thinks of someone else while they are making love. At first they refuse to accept that their marriage will slowly drift into habit bolstered by infidelity, like the marriages they see around them. But gradually they learn the impossibility of giving permanence to something intrinsically perishable. Each discovers that love can be enjoyed with someone else; and the discovery, since it destroys their ideal in each other, also destroys a part of them.

The power of the film derives in large part from the intensity of Juliette Mayniel and Jean Kosta as the husband and wife. Both have a superb natural feeling for their parts, creating an atmosphere that is entirely true to life—even though the film presupposes a rare purity, a noble dedication, among lovers. They are in fact a heroic couple, set apart by various characteristics (physical beauty, a capacity for suffering and an intense concern for the way they are to live) from the rest of the world.

The other characters are seen as through lovers' eyes. All are



Mother and daughter-in-law in Ray's Tagore adaptation, "Samapti".



pathetic, some grotesque. Their various activities serve to illustrate the decay of love. The husband's boss, who describes himself as a realist but is merely an opportunist, enjoys his adulteries like so many good meals. The wife's sister, married to a man as unattractive as he is obtuse, launches herself without discrimination into adventure—beginning with a rendezvous in the lavatory of a hotel. As a refrain to these smirking escapades, a scene is repeated three times in the *concierge's* flat. In it the *concierge* goes through the overtures to a dispassionate coupling with his wife, who, hatchet-faced and be-curlered, awaits the skeleton of the once meaningful endearment ("Mimi, the lettuce is good") which now serves as the signal.

The humiliation for the lovers is in their discovery of how much they belong to this world, as the ephemeral nature of their own emotions is brought home to them. It is a humiliation made further painful for being ironic. By the end of the film the wife has found her first extra-marital enjoyment. She finds it not with someone who might replace her husband, but with a repellent professional seducer who conquers her weakness by the shabby mastery of his technique.

In many ways *The Love Trap* is crude. It is a fault common to the young French directors to sacrifice believability to the stressing of a point. As Truffaut's delinquent hero is sinned against, unsinning, so Mocky's dice are loaded in favour of his lovers. The world outside them is too unrelievedly gross, too much a caricatured antithesis of everything the couple stand for. Gatherings of people, be they old folks' reunions or *thés dansants*, seem included purely to show how tedious other people can be. No character is introduced, no liaison struck up, but it is used to repel us, or to point the contrast between crass normalcy and the lovers' ideal. The point is, of course, made—often imaginatively; but it is too much belaboured. And in the over-emphasis our sympathies for the lovers are lessened.

The structure, as well as much of the photography (remarkably free from exhibitionism) is often primitive. The film progresses as a series of statements tacked one after the other, not as an entity that is developed and controlled. The consequence is a sacrificing of cumulative power. At many stages it could end and remain a whole—a different story, but a whole. These technical weaknesses might well have been caused by lack of money and difficult shooting conditions. The lack of selectiveness seems to stem from the director's closeness to such personal material, and his consequent difficulty in seeing it objectively. Nevertheless, the theme is meaningful, and Mocky's passionate seriousness makes it tell.

PHILLIP RILEY

## In Brief

**LIVING JAZZ.** Take a smoke-filled cellar full of jiving couples, a group of white or coloured musicians and a bizarre lighting scheme, and you will have a fair idea of what the cinema feels jazz should look like. The ultra-sophisticated example, of course, is Gjon Mili's *Jammin' the Blues*, in which excellent musicians are used as subjects for a stylish stills photographer. Jack Gold's new British film, *Living Jazz*, brings us back to everyday reality. This is a proletarian, unsordid view of jazz featuring the Bruce Turner Jump Band, a fairly conventional mainstream combination consisting of six friendly musicians who play together because they enjoy it. Here is an attempt to present both the public and the private face of jazz: we see the players talking over their numbers together and we are also given glimpses of their families and their personal idiosyncracies. Mr. Gold approaches his material rather in the manner of a Free Cinema observer: faces and milieu are important to him in fairly equal measure. Thus, near the beginning, we see all six players at individual rehearsal—as the camera watches them at work, the right distance is achieved and the men's personalities seem to grow out of their music.

In the middle sections of the film, however, something more is needed. The band goes on tour through grey, industrial landscapes, stopping at a wayside café or a New Town, and playing in antiseptic ballrooms on one-night stands. Now tinged with the melancholy of Mr. Gold's earlier production, *The Visit*, the new film does not quite recapture that film's concentrated, highly personal method of observation. Here, we watch from a distance as the men wander casually round a market or stop for a chat, uneasy, perhaps, because they are not working together. Emotions are hinted at, but we are never quite sure what they are meant to reveal. Afterwards, there is a return to the band's public face: rehearsals are over, the musicians become a single entity again and present themselves to their young audience.

These musical sequences alone are sufficient to place the film



"Living Jazz".

among the select company of really worthwhile jazz films. Jack Gold and his cameraman, Bryan Probyn, have an instinctive feeling for the way musicians should be "visualised" and there are many passages of remarkable shooting, ranging from a long, hand-held single take in which the camera passes rhythmically from one player to another, to the final sequence of sharply cut close-ups. Shown during the recent Jazz Season at the National Film Theatre, *Living Jazz* made most of the other films look pretty phoney and synthetic. In many ways, it reveals an extension of its director's range of interests; let us hope that he will not have to wait too long for another assignment.—JOHN GILLET

RENÉ CLÉMENT'S *PLEIN SOLEIL* (*Hillcrest*) is not the first film to suggest that an eye for fresh and fashionable talent may turn out to be a mixed blessing for an established director. For while it certainly owes its smart finish to Decae's Eastman Colour photography and Alain Delon's bare-chested box-office appeal, it has every appearance of being the work of a clever but self-indulgent film-maker, only too prepared to accommodate the needs of the glossy co-production (this one is Franco-Italian with American characters and small-part players) and the world market. The story, elliptically adapted by Paul Gégauff (Chabrol's scriptwriter) and Clément from a thriller by Patricia Highsmith, bears certain superficial resemblances at the outset to the same author's *Strangers on a Train* and to Chabrol's *Les Cousins*: two inextricably tied young men, one (Maurice Ronet) rich, idle, callous, given to whip-cracking in the bedroom and towing his one-man crew astern in a dinghy at the mercy of the sun; the other (Delon) poor but criminally brilliant, bound to the first by envy, misery and eventual murder. The relationship is oblique, complicated as in all such stories by a shadowy girl (Marie Laforêt) in love with Ronet but desired by the narcissistic Delon, and impelled by the latter's ruthless and involved pursuit via forgery and impersonation of the rich boy's wealth. Initially the situation is an intriguing one, inventively established, but its development soon palls. This kind of thriller calls for finesse, perception and a knife-edged narrative drive. *Plein Soleil* looks too often instead like an over-illustrated travel brochure, all luxury yachts on the one hand and gratuitous local colour on the other, right down to portentous close-ups of fish-heads in the market. There are good scenes—Delon trying on Ronet's clothes while he kisses his reflection in a mirror, or trying to lug a corpse twice his size down a flight of stairs. But the script meanders hopelessly, concentrates (and with an equal lack of clarity) on the mechanics of Delon's impersonation at the expense of all the characterisation,



and badly lacks a climax one can believe in. The acting is sketchy but unforced, apart from Delon's embarrassed attempt at an eye tic when an unwelcome caller catches him off-guard; though it is symptomatic of the film that Elvire Popesco should steal the honours in the peripheral, not to say irrelevant, role of a ballet *régisseuse*. Decae has done the Italian locations proud; but, like Clément's neurotically showy direction, they have merely smothered the makings of what should have remained an incisively ironic thriller.

PETER JOHN DYER

**THREE FROM DISNEY.** A few years ago the term "family entertainment" had become a recommendation as damning in its faint praise as "charming" or "homespun". At best, it was a guarantee of innocuous sludge; at worst, a joke. For this decline, Walt Disney, the chief purveyor of family entertainment, must be held partly if not largely responsible. But latterly there have been encouraging signs of a new vitality in the Disney product, which could go a long way toward restoring one's faith in the kind of film that attempts nothing more strenuous than to be quietly enjoyable.

In so far as a new full-length cartoon is always an event, *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* reveals perhaps the most noticeable evidence of the fresher Disney approach. Sentimental as always, it manages nevertheless to be fairly restrained even in its characterisation of the cute puppy Dalmatians. The humour—notably a splendidly Tallulah-ish Cruella de Vil—has a touch of sophisticated astringency. And the London setting gives scope for softly atmospheric backgrounds, refreshingly different from the harshly bright picture postcard look of many recent Disney cartoons. The fairly long in the tooth child, through whose eyes most Disney dramas, live or otherwise, are seen, seems to have grown up just a little; a fact which should please adults while not offending the young.

The combination of that schoolboy sense of fun, which is Disney's stock in trade, and a sharper sense of the ridiculous is happily demonstrated in *The Absent-Minded Professor*. One feels that only a Disney film could enjoy the delights of "flubber"—the anti-gravitational discovery of Fred MacMurray's engagingly anti-social professor—with the enthusiasm of an infant who stumbles on the fact that a pea in a tin will rattle endlessly and agreeably. Yet, for all its seeming innocence, it quite deftly ridicules human greed and governmental pomposity. The set-piece tomfoolery—MacMurray's flying jalopy, Keenan Wynn's helpless jumping jag and the basketball team's triumphant home win on "flubber"-soled shoes—has a genuine comic drive.

One notes, to his credit, that Robert Stevenson directed the film. But, for better or worse, a Disney film is unmistakably a Disney film whether it's directed by Robert Stevenson, Ken Annakin or Don Chaffey. They work, one suspects, to a set of Disney rules and principles. A better director—such as Chaffey with *Greystriars Bobby*—can merely accentuate the worthwhile qualities and play down the faults. The meticulous sense of period detail in *Greystriars Bobby*, for instance, was equally in evidence in *Pollyanna* and *Toby Tyler*. But Chaffey brings a warm-hearted, Victorian gravity to the slender story, about a faithful dog which is granted the freedom of the City of Edinburgh, which is both endearing and exactly in character.

While Disney has an enduring place in cinema history, Disney productions are undeniably limited in scope and aim. What they attempt is a very small thing in terms of film-making. But even a small thing deserves a small cheer when it's done well.

MARGARET HINXMAN

FOR HIS RETURN to film direction, Peter Ustinov has chosen the relatively easy course of adapting his own most successful play to the screen. **ROMANOFF AND JULIET** (*Rank*) is charming, slight, and on his own admission a proving flight before he takes wing—with *Billy Budd* and perhaps *The Love of Four Colonels*—as a fully fledged Hollywood producer-director. It is also played surprisingly straight. Where the stage play owed what distinction it had to the inspired improvisations of the President-chorus, played by Ustinov himself, and the intricate revue-style elaborations of Concordia's ceremonies and traditions, the film tends to subdue both. Such portions of the President's role (still played by Ustinov) as do not serve any particular plot function have been ruthlessly pruned; and although the glimpses of Concordian airways and telephones, Concordia's dealings with the United Nations and the Concordian army on manoeuvres, are characteristic, the invention is severely rationed, spread thinly and evenly over the whole film.

If the more extravagant humour has gone, so too have the more soulful passages of the Romeo and Juliet story between the

American ambassador's daughter and the Russian ambassador's son; indeed the nominal romantic leads, even though played by the film's main box-office bait, Sandra Dee and John Gavin, now have very little to do in the story and relatively little screen time to do it in. This, at least, is an obvious improvement, since the lovers are not particularly interesting in themselves. The acting is excellent, especially from Akim Tamiroff and Tamara Shayne, and even John Gavin is surprisingly effective, partly because cast in such a way that the oddly stiff-necked quality of his playing is put to the best possible use. But it is saddening that Ustinov's exuberant fantasy has been kept so carefully in check. Evidently this is a deliberate attempt at self-discipline, to avoid the excesses of his three British films. Now he has proved that he can keep his talents within commercial bounds, let us hope he will be more inclined to explore further the vistas these earlier films so invitingly opened.—JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

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the head-hunters of New Guinea but suffers from the tendency among today's travel documentarists continually to call attention to the dangers and privations they are undergoing. A return to stoicism, please. Preoccupation with the camera is softening up the tissues.

Finally, one must mention the contribution of the Cinéma-mathèque Française to this year's Festival: a retrospective of Mizoguchi (including the 1936 *Sisters of the Gion*, long considered lost) and an enchanting Méliès commemoration. Coloured fantasies, parodies, space flights, and a piece of pure Ionesco entitled *The Diabolic Tenant*: one is left wondering whether there is anything Méliès failed to invent, apart from sound and the wide screen. And these possibly only because he didn't need them.

DEREK PROUSE

## A Buñuel Postscript

THE FESTIVAL JURY DECIDED to award the Grand Prix jointly to Henri Colpi's *Une Aussi Longue Absence* (discussed by Louis Marcorelles in the Spring number of SIGHT AND SOUND) and to Buñuel's *Viridiana*, shown after Derek Prouse's departure. Thus the festival ended in a blaze of controversy, with a film which puzzled, excited and distressed in equal proportions. Starting with credit titles accompanied by the "Hallelujah" Chorus, the film traces the brutal experiences undergone by a young novice, which include an unsuccessful seduction by her fetishist uncle and involvement with a gang of rascally beggars whom she cares for as an act of mercy. Though it is less physically violent than some of Buñuel's recent work, *Viridiana's* tone of moral disgust recalls the venom of *El*. Some found in it a gigantic symbol of how Spain now appears to him (it is his first film made in his native land since the mid-Thirties); others saw in its anti-religious statements a return to the nihilism of his early days. On a first viewing, the dream-like, erotic scenes with the uncle leave the strongest impression, whereas a sequence such as the prayer meeting, which is cross-cut with a particularly messy piece of building demolition, seems over-emphatic in its symbolism. But this is a film with immense overall control, and without the padding and waywardness of some of his Mexican work. Not surprisingly, the beggars provide its most characteristic sequences, culminating in a wild orgy of destruction in the uncle's house. Framed in one shot in the manner of an obscene Last Supper, they also suggest that Buñuel's view of the world has reached a dark and truly desperate stage. The film ends with the novice, now isolated and shocked into submissiveness, settling down to an apparently endless game of cards with another potential seducer. Unlike the striking ambiguity of the last scene of *Nazarin*, everything is now reduced to dust and ashes.

JOHN GILLET



**ROBERT  
VAS**

# HUMANIST SPUTNIKS



"Ballad of a Soldier": the mother sweeping across the wheatfield to meet her son.

WHEN THAT NOW FAMOUS shot of an upside-down tank in Chukrai's *Ballad of a Soldier* appeared on the screen at last year's Cannes Festival, the tremendous applause which greeted it was also striking proof that the dull days of a rigid, Zhdanovian camera were definitely over in the Soviet cinema. Things were taken even further in Kalatozov's *The Letter That Was Not Sent*, which was withdrawn from festival showing at the last moment. A pity, for it could have made up a trilogy (completed by *The Lady with the Little Dog*) which would have effectively reflected some major trends in present-day Soviet cinema: a vigorous rediscovery of the "how" alongside the "what", and a determined pursuit of the contemporary idiom.

Influences from Western cinema and literature are evident behind this modernism. The narrative line in Chukrai's film and in Kalatozov's is simple and straightforward, like a story by Hemingway or Camus. Within a given situation—a soldier's leave, or a search for gold in the Taiga—the emphasis, as in the novels, is on psychological penetration. The urge to be up-to-date results in a style leaning heavily on close-ups and elaborate angles; and there is a visible striving after an intimate, chamber-music effect, something genuinely present in that real "ballad of a soldier", Bondarchuk's *Destiny of a Man*.

This determination to confront the individual and his emotions is in itself a welcome change in Soviet cinema; but the "modern" methods employed are uneasy and tentative. While devices like the many big close-ups in *Look Back in Anger*, the dialectic interaction of man and landscape in *L'Avventura*, or the restless cutting in *A Bout de Souffle* really do communicate something of our contemporary Western insecurity, and are the logical methods of a screen language stressing man's alienation from the world he lives in, such devices when adapted to the Soviet reality result only in a strangely hermetic kind of purity. The big, clean close-ups, the angled figures against the sunset, typify all those modern close-up-against-a-landscape heroes around which the narratives are built. The soldier in *Ballad*, the geologists in Kalatozov's film, even Sokolov in *Destiny of a Man*, are all rather overdrawn and obvious characters, part journalistic portrait, part over-conscious epic hero.

And they seem to be somewhat lonely, too. Not only in their circumstances—going on leave, crossing the German lines,

being isolated on an uninhabited island—but in comparison with Soviet films of the unforgettable late Thirties period they are also pretty lonely within a single shot. Compared with these modern close-ups, that was perhaps the "medium shot" period: vivid life was always whirling there around the figure of a Maxim or a Lenin. Poetry, too, was then to be found in the human depth and texture of a single long-held shot—as in *The Vyborg Side*, when Maxim, the new worker-manager of the National Bank, supervises the first budget of the Soviet regime with an expression in which official dignity is blended with his usual mischievous smile. In the "modern style", however, a cut from the soldier's love scene to a sunset or a birch grove serves for poetry. And one begins to wonder whether this advance towards an interior portrait of a Sokolov or an Aliosha Skvortsov isn't finally yet another circuitous route around reality, a brand of neo-purity in which figures are shot against the sky, young girls die amidst flowers and the titles include such concepts as "Ballad", "Poem" or "Destiny".

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This might, perhaps, have something to do with the obvious effort to fit this contemporary, intimate method into the traditional sweeping Russian epic formula and the ideological context of Soviet realism. In *The Letter That Was Not Sent* (still, unfortunately, without a British distributor) the boundless landscape of the Taiga ensures the first, while the second is provided by a heroic though unusually pessimistic story (even Tatiana Samoilova dies!) about four geologists, searching for a Siberian gold field, of whom only one survives. Kalatozov, though, seems much less interested in the humanist conception of the whole than in technical experiment and the visual thrill of the details: a most convincingly staged forest fire; long, hurtling tracks along thickets in the Kurosawa manner; the interaction of close-up (the individual) and extreme long shot (Nature). With his photographer, the inimitable Urusevsky, he manoeuvres his camera with the gusto of a Dziga Vertov.

In the very first shot, starting on a close-up and moving away from it to a distance of a good mile, they let us know that the helicopter of *The Cranes Are Flying* is back in action. From then on, a hand-held camera chases the action everywhere, like a faithful dog—indeed, like a guide dog—running, pulsating, breathing almost boastfully, "Look, isn't that a marvellous angle?". Influences are plentiful. There is a





Tatiana Samoilova in "The Letter That Was Not Sent".

French-type endeavour for a dreamy *musique d'images*, a vibrant Japanese vigour, "Russki" romantic grandeur, and all these supported by an almost Teutonic parade of the forces of nature: fire, rain, clouds, snowstorms, echoes and trumpets, to legitimise the grandiose visual conception.

The result of all this conscious modernism, paradoxically, is something strangely baroque; and in its self-contained action scenes the film manages to live up to its intentions. The weaker, more personal sections, however, betray that Kalatozov's conception is an academic one, even if he sets out to be an adventurous academician in shirt-sleeves. Like Chukrai, he splits up his world into little bits of film without being able to splice it together into a whole: he has a lot of beautiful glimpses but no total vision. And the result is a controversial film empty of real controversy.

The case of *Ballad of a Soldier* (BLC-British Lion) is rather less straightforward. Kalatozov's real hero seems to be his restless camera, to which one may or may not respond. The forces Chukrai puts into the field, however, are more general. His hero is upholding Humanism and Poetry—both with capital letters.

In a lower key, and with proportionately more genuine feeling, this could well be a personal work of engaging promise. Goodwill, humility, a viewpoint—all with small letters!—are evident in the best passages; and the close-up study of Aliosha, the Russian soldier whose adventures and encounters during a brief war-time leave form the basis of the story, is fundamentally well-conceived. The narrative itself flows with a pleasing romantic force.

But then Chukrai comes along with his capital letters, giving an extra stress to all the designated elements and failing to appreciate that he is not yet strong enough as an artist to put them honourably on the screen. His Humanism becomes 90 minutes of high-mindedness, during which his actual

human beings are either glorified heroes or sketchily drawn bit-players, such as the faithless wife, the father, Aliosha's mother, or the hard-faced woman truck driver. He wants to be Poetic, so here come the love scenes against the sunset, the wartime children innocently blowing their elaborate soap-bubbles, the mother sweeping across the wheatfield with a resounding "Aliosha-a-a" to meet her son. The whole conception can hardly help leading straight into a Hollywood grand finale, with a Soviet Tiomkin cueing all the humanist violins and the narrator telling us that Aliosha (almost in spite of all this) was nothing more than a simple Russian soldier.

If this is Left Wing cinema, I feel that one would almost prefer the *Alamo* style of treatment. Along with his breathless romanticism, Chukrai strains after a Dovzhenko-style imagery; but he forgets that Dovzhenko did not find it necessary to give his apples in the rain an elaborate beauty treatment, or to plant his Russian soil with silhouetted birch trees bearing symbols amongst their leaves. Chukrai's instruments are the commonplaces of romantic idealism, and his characters serve as riders to this concept. (If we see a beautiful young girl in close-up, we can guess that she will soon be killed by a bomb—and amongst flowers, for war is horrible . . .) This is not a genuine simplicity, as we found it in *Earth*, but a forced naïveté, a Primary School lesson in Humanism.

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Most of Chukrai's pupils, however, have found him well-equipped as an instructor. Cannes was enthusiastic; the Californian *Film Quarterly* called the film "humane, unsentimental and true"; *Time* found that "the theatre booms with an immense amen to life." Aliosha's story has won laurels at many international festivals; and Gerasimov, the film director and semi-official Soviet spokesman on questions of film policy, exclaimed enthusiastically "Heavens, what purity! This is the way to live," comparing the film's "reflection of Soviet reality" with the confused pessimism of *La Dolce Vita*. And this sets one considering how easily the word "humanism" is now employed. Images such as the suffering child (preferably Jewish), nuns in a convent, the last survivors of mankind on the sea-shore, are almost automatically acclaimed; and in a climate of the sham it becomes that much more difficult to recognise the real. The more inhumane things around us become, the easier it is to pass off an abstract, romantic humanism as the real thing. It is certainly easier to swallow than Buñuel's.

Soviet cinema can never afford to make a *Dolce Vita*; and romantic purity is an effective way to counterbalance the "Two Minute Hate", especially if a world-wide audience is ready to load it with awards. In a sense, it is our own hidden shame which makes us exclaim "What purity!"—for we privately know that our mythical, unified Western Civilisation no longer really exists. But a unified East does have a real existence, even if it is a forced unity. So long as the Western critic discovers—and he is, fortunately, free to do so—the inner beauty of the *mise-en-scène* in a bestial Hitchcock murder, or the "human depth" behind the silly shop-girls of *Les Bonnes Femmes*, or declares that in Luigi Nono's terrifying disharmonies "Western culture may have found a new Giuseppe Verdi," it will still paradoxically always be the other side which is able to send up its humanist sputniks, give its "pure" lessons in "how to live". All we can do is resign ourselves to a somewhat guilty applause, consoling ourselves with the thought that a Chekhov would have done it all so very differently.



# BOOK REVIEWS

**QU'EST-CE QUE LE CINEMA?, by André Bazin. Volume III, Cinéma et Sociologie. Illustrated. (Collection 7e Art. Editions du Cerf, Paris. 9 N.F.)**

I HAD BETTER BE FRANK. When I began writing more or less seriously on the cinema, with an odd couple of books on other subjects to my dubious credit, my concern with films amounted to little more than an exercise in versatility. However I was asked to join the staff of *L'Ecran Français*, and there was André Bazin. There is no question that he must in retrospect be looked upon as the outstanding figure among the contributors to this influential post-war weekly. (The one mistake, incidentally, made by Richard Roud in an otherwise accurate and searching assessment of recent trends in French film criticism was in ignoring this lively periodical.) There was a kind of bland radicalism in Bazin's approach which I found infuriating and suffocating. None the less he made me think. Lest these lines be mistaken for a vain little chapter in concealed autobiography, I'd better perhaps add that Bazin made a good many people think.

A few months before his tragically early death he began publishing a selection from his articles; very possibly because, having suffered for years from ill health, he was aware that he would not live to reassess his ideas in new circumstances. The first two books thus compiled were reviewed by Richard Roud in the article already mentioned (SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer/Autumn 1959). A third and final volume—Bazin himself had envisaged four or five—came out last spring. The whole thing reads like a fascinating piece of intellectual wrong-headedness.

I can well understand why Mr. Roud's survey, written from an Anglo-Saxon viewpoint, carries undertones of awe. Bazin's abiding concern deserved to be taken seriously indeed. The trouble is that his pronouncements ought to have been reflected on, neither swallowed whole (as they were by a good many unreflective young men) nor sneered at. One wishes someone might have said gently to him, particularly during the later stages of his development as a critic, "Listen, André, do you *really* think that?" As it was, he gained a truly international reputation largely through asking the wrong questions.

While writing a little book on Jacques Becker, I've come across two contrasting views of *La Rue de l'Estrapade*, Bazin's and Lindsay Anderson's. This is Bazin's: "For the first time, Becker has dared to treat his scenario for what it is, that is to say nothing . . . This is precisely what I find amiable and perhaps admirable, in any case audacious and original, in the conception of his latest film." That reads like a neat and convincing paradox; the trouble is that it amounts to overlooking everything clumsy in the story line. At best, it is a magician's act of explaining away. If we now turn to Anderson's review (written for *Les Cahiers* in defence of Becker), we begin to detect a response to the film. "Becker is one of those directors who is plunged into dissatisfaction by the search for scenarios: not enough of a writer to be able to compose his own scripts, and too much of a poet (as opposed to a *metteur en scène*) to work happily on the ideas of someone else." Hence: "The theme of *Rue de l'Estrapade* had what was needed to set his talent going, yet he never gives us what it seemed to offer."

Bazin seldom evokes very precisely the film (or for that matter the actor) he is writing about. One of the most telling remarks in his trilogy concerns Chaplin ("il ne donne jamais de coups de pied en avant"), but it seems he only uses it as a springboard for another round of doubtful generalisations. He has a characteristic piece on Gabin, "who's always interpreting the same story, his own," with a necessarily bad ending, "like Oedipus". One is left at a loss what to say, for one does not really feel that he is writing about a given actor, and a unique one. This impression, of criticism in a vacuum, is oddly reinforced by a piece on Bogart, much on the same lines. Having gone through the three volumes at one sitting, I found that

the cinema is an ever-spreading phenomenon in a no man's land.

There is a case to be made for film criticism as opposed to reviewing, but Bazin hardly helps. He even encourages a new kind of laziness. We are all aware of the evils of the still prevailing amateurish approach, yet what Bazin and his disciples have done is to give currency to an absurd shorthand: worlds like morphology, ontology, mythology, sociology, have their uses but should be handled sparingly in a cinematic context. Otherwise, one is soon liable to find oneself writing about nothing at all. There is a warning to that effect in the four-page essay on "The Entomology of the Pin-Up Girl", with the following sub-titles: "Définition et Morphologie"; "Métamorphose de la Pin-Up Girl"; "Philosophie de la Pin-Up Girl"; "La Pin-Up et le Cinéma". Why should those half-baked outpourings be published in the third volume, *Cinéma et Sociologie*? Conversely, why not in the first (*Ontologie et Langage*) or the second (*Le Cinéma et les Autres Arts*)? Bazin, alas, did not always eschew the more rhetorical, mechanistic aspects of contemporary French thinking, which is in some ways Germanised.

Some really good essays are oddly marginal—about the saintly image of Stalin in the Soviet cinema, or how it came about that Pagnol launched himself into a kind of neo-realism after resounding statements that the talkies should equate plays for the many. Yet Bazin's realm (and he was, I think, aware of it) lay in the semi-scientific approach. The first and second texts in Volume One are concerned respectively with the photographic image and the invention of the cinema. They are stimulating, rewarding essays, sometimes written with felicity, and Bazin himself has put them where they proudly stand. How did it come, then, that he did not stick to his true vocation? The answer is that he was also a believer—a believer in the cinema.

In the second essay, he attempts to contradict my friend Sadoul's Marxism: "Le cinéma est un phénomène idéaliste. L'idée que les hommes s'en sont faite existait tout armée dans leur cerveau, comme au ciel platonicien." That was written in 1946. In 1955, far from having grown into a cynic, he wrote of film festivals, contrary to everybody's experience: "I dare compare the history of how these festivals were founded to that of a religious Order." Again, one is at a loss what to say—except that there was something admirable in Bazin at his dottiest.

JEAN QUEVAL

**THE THREE FACES OF THE FILM, by Parker Tyler. Illustrated. (Thomas Yoseloff. Distributed in Britain by W. H. Allen, 42s.)**

IT IS ALWAYS TEMPTING to dismiss Parker Tyler ("the only widely published and long acknowledged exponent of multilevel film criticism," says the blurb) as a crank. As a matter of fact, he is not by any means as cranky as he seems, but it remains a moot point whether he is a film critic at any level (or combination of levels). He is a philosopher, sociologist, aesthete, or some unclassifiable amalgam of the three, who finds much of his raw material in the cinema. Many of the essays in this volume, though, have only the most tenuous connection with film criticism as it is normally understood.

A bad film is as useful to the sociologist as a good one—probably more useful, in that it will be less self-sufficient and in all probability less personal, closer to the unconscious assumptions of the great mass of its audience. Mr. Tyler's essay "Hollywood as a Universal Church", on a number of mostly pretty minor films about race prejudice (*Home of the Brave*, *Pinky*, *Lost Boundaries*), offers a perfect example of the approach. It makes excellent reading in itself, being less jargon-ridden than much of his writing, and its isolation of the half-defined assumptions informing the film-makers' treatment of race is unkind but acute. The one thing which the essay does not give us, however, is any inkling of the quality of the finished films after the ideological turpitude of their scripts has been taken into account.

The same tendency is visible throughout the second and third sections of this book: films good, bad and indifferent are called in quite indiscriminately for their marginal relevance to the film as dream or the film as cult. Often a particular film is used only as an extended metaphor in the exposition of a view of the film at large: *Dead of Night* is significant because it "reveals in terms of parable the film mechanisms which unite film with the mechanisms of dream and of supernatural hypothesis"; *Miracle in Milan* emerges as "a portrait of the mythmaking faculty itself." The book's first section, which at least promises to deal exclusively with the film as art, is not much better. Forced to make film his subject instead of an illustration of his subject, Mr. Tyler tends to retreat into intricate



verbiage which borders perilously at times on the indecipherable. Whatever does it mean to say, for instance, (of *Rashomon*): "The total psychological space in this movie, because of its complexity, is rendered in literal time as is music"?

All this is the greater pity because when Mr. Tyler takes time out, as he does on occasion, from high-flown verbiage or abstract philosophising actually to write about films, the results can be most satisfactory. His essay on "The Eyewitness Era in Film Fiction", for example, which is about the principles behind the shot-on-the-streets-where-it-really-happened school of documentary drama, is both just and provocative, but unfortunately in this volume it stands almost alone.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

LE CINEMA, NOTRE METIER. By Louis Daquin. (Les Editeurs Français Réunis, Paris. 9.50 NF.)

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CINEMA ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS. An annotated international bibliography. (UNESCO, 7s. 6d.)

THE MISFITS. By Arthur Miller. (Penguin Books, 2s. 6d.)

LE NEO-REALISME ITALIEN. By Raymond Borde and André Bouissy. (La Cinémathèque Suisse, Clairefontaine, Lausanne.)

NOUVELLE VAGUE? By Jacques Siclier. (Editions du Cerf, Paris. 9 N.F.)

POEMS ON THE THEATRE. By Bertolt Brecht, translated by John Berger and Anna Bostock. (Scorpion Press, 5s.)

RENE CLAIR. By Jean Mitry. (Editions Universitaires, Paris.)

TELEVISION AND THE POLITICAL IMAGE. By Joseph Trenaman and Denis McQuail. (Methuen, 30s.)

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Pay Television

*The Editor*, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—May I comment on two aspects of the leading article on Pay Television in your Spring issue?

In the first place, the BBC's attitude—for which you quote an article by Mr. Brian Inglis in *The Spectator*—was not correctly represented. May I make it clear? The BBC could not engage in Pay Television under its present Charter. But we are bound to take an interest in any system which might have an important effect on viewers' interests and the Corporation's activities. What we do question is whether it would be in the public interest to use any of the very limited number of channels available in this country, for programmes which would be restricted to people willing and able to make special payments to see them. We would not support the use for such a purpose of any of the frequencies that we see as being necessary to the BBC for the purpose of providing the public as a whole with a choice of two contrasting television programmes.

My second comment is upon the argument that Pay Television would cater for minority audiences. On the evidence available in America and Canada, the investment needed for the provision of Pay Television facilities is high and the cost of operating such a service is very much greater than that of putting out programmes in the normal way. It is very doubtful whether the necessary high revenue for sustaining a regular service of Pay Television could be secured from minority audiences. We think it much more likely that Pay Television would put a premium on the sale of highly popular programmes, in order to make the system pay.

Yours faithfully,

BBC, Broadcasting House, ROLAND FOX,  
London, W.1. Assistant Head of Publicity.

### Sensuality in the Cinema

SIR,—Mr. Rhode's generalisation on the alienation of man in our dehumanised, industrialised society is a theme which writers such as Lawrence have treated before with great insight. But if his comments are intended as a statement on the 'lack of sensuality' in the cinema—then I feel that Mr. Rhode can have seen no films apart from those he mentions.

Mr. Rhode seems to muddle sensuality with sensuousness; Milton

himself invented 'sensuous', since with its lascivious associations 'sensual' no longer meant 'operating through the senses'. Many modern directors show an immensely deep sensuousness—and Mr. Rhode might have considered Nicholas Ray, whose sensuousness in *Rebel without a Cause* is comparable to that of Henry Moore. The lighting of the car chrome to form a massive oval behind James Dean in the 'Chicken Run' sequence is an example of the magnificent sensuousness of the whole film.

Mr. Rhode does not mention one of the most sensuous of all directors—Stanley Kubrick; the boxing sequence of *Killer's Kiss* fills one with physical nausea, and the hard-as-concrete long shot in which the hero plunges through a window to the pavement ten feet below creates a physical reaction in the audience. Stanley Kubrick always makes us aware of "the sensual relationship between characters and their environment"—see *Paths of Glory, passim*.

The still detail of the *Dolce Vita* orgy scene gives no indication of the penetratingly sensuous qualities of this sequence—the purpose of which was to create disgust at the dead sensuality of the participants. Certainly their bodies were dehumanised—that was the point of the scene. To use a single detail of a wide screen shot out of context is just dishonest. Mr. Rhode might have mentioned one of the most sensuously sensual shots of the film in which Anita Ekberg lets her hair billow around her as she leans from the top of St. Peter's.

Does Mr. Rhode really think that film technique is just a matter of lighting, montage and movement? Techniques such as tracking, deep focus, and 'spatial relationships' can create a form capable of as complex a sensuous impact as any painting. Mr. Rhode's 16-line paragraph on technique seems such total gibberish that I wonder if he could explain it further? (Literature is "narrative and statement" towards which the cinema (if it is to be an art) is ever pressed!)

The recent films of Baratier, Bergman, Losey, Aldrich, Astruc, Truffaut, Godard, Fellini, Hitchcock, Antonioni, Becker, Cassavetes, Kurosawa, and Buñuel have contained a compelling sensuousness, surely obvious to all those with eyesight. Even the English cinema can create a sensuous impact—the documentary *Life on the Usk* (shown with *The World of Suzy Wong*) contained a shot of such claustrophobia as to be comparable to the most terrible of Buñuel's—as tens of thousands of eels suffocate themselves to death, squeezed together in the narrow waters, the camera descends in an opposite movement to the eels—epitomising the inevitable tragedy of Nature.

Yours faithfully,

26 Museum Road, DAVID SHERWIN-WHITE.  
Oxford.

### The Magnificent Seven

SIR,—I notice your reviewer Penelope Houston when discussing *The Magnificent Seven* (SIGHT AND SOUND, Spring 1961) says that the dispute at the beginning of the film was over the burial of a dead Negro. In fact it was over a dead Indian. I hope this does not indicate a desire to oversimplify the "message" of the incident.

Yours faithfully,

12 East Albert Road, ANTHONY BARNELL.  
Liverpool, 17.

PENELOPE HOUSTON writes: No—merely a reviewer's slip of the pen.

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20th CENTURY-FOX for *The Innocents*.  
M-G-M for *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *Silk Stockings*, *Queen Christina*, *Summer Holiday*.  
PARAMOUNT for *Summer and Smoke*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Too Late Blues*, *City Streets*, *Love Me Tonight*, *One Eyed Jacks*.  
UNITED ARTISTS for *Hoodlum Priest*, *War Hunt*, *The Misfits*.  
BRITISH LION for *Ballad of a Soldier*.  
ALLIED FILM MAKERS for *Whistle Down the Wind*.  
GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Morte di un Amico*.  
CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *Aparajito*, *The World of Apu*.  
CURZON FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Pather Panchali*.  
UNIFRANCE FILM for *Les Mauvais Coups*, *Jules et Jim*.  
SOVEXPORTFILM for *The Turbulent Years*, *The Letter that was Not Sent*.  
FILMS MARCEAU-COCINOR for *La Proie pour l'Ombre*.  
ROME-PARIS FILM for *Une Femme est Une Femme*, *Lola*.  
INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTIONS S.P.A. CINEMATOGRAFICE for *Les Godelureaux*.  
PRODUCTIONS GEORGES DE BEAUREGARD for *Le Petit Soldat*.  
RIRE CINEMATOGRAFICA-FRANCINEX for *Che Gioia Vivere*.  
UNINCI-FILMS 59 for *Viridiana*.  
SATYAJIT RAY PRODUCTIONS for *Two Daughters*.  
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SOLE AGENTS for U.S.A.: Eastern News Company, 306 West 11 Street, New York.

PRINTED BY Brown Knight & Truscott Ltd., London, England.

BLOCKS BY W. F. Sedgwick Ltd., London.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES (4 issues), 16s. including postage.

U.S.A.: \$3. Price per copy in United States, 75 cents.

PUBLICATION DATES: 1st January, 1st April, 1st July and 1st October.

Overseas Editions: 12th of these months.

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# A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films of special interest to *SIGHT AND SOUND* readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars

- \*\*\***A BOUT DE SOUFFLE** (*BLC/British Lion*) Jean-Luc Godard's first film, scripted by Truffaut, and the summation of France's original "new wave". An irrational, infantile, heartless tale of a would-be Bogart (brilliantly played by Jean-Paul Belmondo) whose love for a semi-intellectual American girl is his downfall; done with peremptory, fascinating style. (Jean Seberg, Jean-Pierre Melville.)
- \***ABSENT-MINDED PROFESSOR, THE** (*Disney*) The Disney back-room boys enjoy themselves putting to good comic use an antigravitational discovery christened flubber. Essentially a one-joke story, but for the most part deftly fantastic, and put across amiably by Fred MacMurray, Keenan Wynn, Nancy Olsen and others. (Director, Robert Stevenson.) *Reviewed.*
- ALL IN A NIGHT'S WORK** (*Paramount*) Mildly amusing but heavily handled story about a case of suspected blackmail, benefiting from an energetic infusion of Shirley MacLaine. Some bright cracks on the hazards of running a magazine empire, much bedroom innuendo. (Dean Martin, Charlie Ruggles, Cliff Robertson; director, Joseph Anthony. Technicolor.)
- ANGEL WORE RED, THE** (*M-G-M*) Priest (Dirk Bogarde) and prostitute (Ava Gardner) engage in a few antiseptic clinches during the Spanish Civil War: unrelieved gloom. (Joseph Cotten, Vittorio De Sica; director, Nunnally Johnson.)
- \*\***BALLAD OF A SOLDIER** (*BLC/British Lion*) Offered a medal, a 19-year-old war hero begs leave instead to go home and see his mother. Mannered, fuzzily focused, comic-sentimental exercise in the Soviet cinema's newest vein of rosy realism. (Vladimir Ivashov, Shanna Prokhorenko; director, Grigori Chukhrai.) *Reviewed.*
- \***BEN-HUR** (*M-G-M*) Out of five years' preparation, 6½ months' shooting at Cinecittà, 40,000 tons of sand and a sea of blood and Camera 65 celluloid, director William Wyler has fished a memorable 9-minute chariot race, some Victorian scripture-book frescoes and an unexpectedly forceful Messala from Stephen Boyd. (Charlton Heston, Jack Hawkins, Hugh Griffith, Haya Harareet. Technicolor, Panavision.)
- \***CROSSING OF THE RHINE, THE** (*Mondial*) Conflicting duties and the inadequacy of patriotism are the main themes of two intertwined stories about a couple of Frenchmen taken prisoner during the last war. One of Cayatte's episodic "lawyer's" films, inflated, posturing, emotionally and intellectually invalid. (Charles Aznavour, Nicole Courcel, Georges Rivière.)
- DON'T BOTHER TO KNOCK** (*Warner-Pathé*) A harassed Richard Todd flogs to death an emaciated joke about a lounge-suited Casanova who gives various girls the keys to his Edinburgh flat while he tours the Continent. Overdecorated bed- and bath-room farce, with Baedeker trimmings. (Nicole Maurey, June Thorburn; director, Cyril Frankel. Technicolor, CinemaScope.)
- \*\*\***EROICA** (*Contemporary*) Andrzej Munk's ironic, bitter, brilliantly sustained short-story film about the Polish mystique of heroism. In the first episode a drunken opportunist is forced by chance into the role of a Resistance hero; in the second the morale of a prison camp is maintained by the legend of the one man who escaped. (Edward Dziewonski, Tadeusz Lomnicki.)
- \***EXODUS** (*United Artists*) Triple-decker history of the foundation of Israel, adapted from Leon Uris's cantankerous best-seller. History thinly sliced for the box-office, with a good word for everyone; even for Premier admirers, it's a long, hard slog to the finish. (Paul Newman, Eva Marie Saint, Ralph Richardson, Sal Mineo. Technicolor, Super-Panavision 70.) *Reviewed.*
- FLAME IN THE STREETS** (*Rank*) The colour problem rears its head during one alarmingly busy London night. Well-intentioned, superficially outspoken thesis film, with working-class impersonations from John Mills and Brenda de Banzie and some sturdy acting in the minor roles. (Sylvia Syms, Earl Cameron, Ann Lynn; director, Roy Baker. Colour and CinemaScope.)
- GO NAKED IN THE WORLD** (*M-G-M*) Or simply ring Butterfield 9. (Gina Lollobrigida, Anthony Franciosa, Ernest Borgnine; director, Ranald MacDougall. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.)
- GREYFRIARS BOBBY** (*Disney*) The tiny tale of a loyal little Skye terrier in Victorian Edinburgh. An engaging display of canine charm for children and susceptible adults, done with simple gravity and humour. (Donald Crisp, Laurence Naismith, Alexander Mackenzie, Kay Walsh; director, Don Chaffey. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*
- \***GUNS OF NAVARONE, THE** (*Columbia*) Adventures of a British sabotage team on a Greek island. The introduction sets the scene for an epic: what follows is just an action picture, and although Carl Foreman's script has points to make about men in war, they're never very explicit. (Gregory Peck, David Niven, Anthony Quinn, Anthony Quayle; director, J. Lee Thompson. Technicolor, CinemaScope.) *Reviewed.*
- \*\***HOODLUM PRIEST, THE** (*United Artists*) The execution of a bewildered adolescent, entrapped by life and a melodramatically rigged script, affords producer-star Don Murray the opportunity for a well-meaning but crudely emotional attack on capital punishment. Irvin Kershner's direction nonetheless reveals a spark of honesty and invention burning behind a foreground of sermonising clichés. (Keir Dullea, Larry Gates.) *Reviewed.*
- \*\***LOVE TRAP, THE** (*Unifilms*) Jean-Pierre Mocky's second film, the portrait of a young marriage break-up. Candid, certainly sympathetic, but marred by a mania for stylisation, caricature and the sex symbol. Touching performances by Juliette Mayniel and Jean Kosta; Shuftan's photography is excellently grey. *Reviewed.*
- \*\***MEIN KAMPF** (*Gala*) Massive documentary compilation on the life and times of Hitler. The raw material of history, though lacking the ultimate authority of a contribution to historical literature. (Director, Erwin Leiser.)
- \*\***MISFITS, THE** (*United Artists*) Arthur Miller's story of lost child divorcee (Marilyn Monroe) and three cowboys searching for a meaning in life. They find it in a brilliant sequence of a mustang round-up, but by this time the symbolism is running wilder than the horses. (Clark Gable, Montgomery Clift, Eli Wallach; director, John Huston.) *Reviewed.*
- \*\***ONE-EYED JACKS** (*Paramount*) Marlon Brando's bank-robber Rio pursuing a vendetta against the respectable sheriff, Dad (!), who once betrayed him. A film of fits and starts, romantic impulses and Freudian overtones, with everything attuned to Brando's thunder-cloud performance. (Karl Malden, Pina Pellicer, Katy Jurado; director, Marlon Brando. Technicolor, Vista-Vision.) *Reviewed.*
- \*\***ONE HUNDRED AND ONE DALMATIANS** (*Disney*) Feature cartoon about a family of Dalmatian pups kidnapped by Cruella de Vil, a fast-driving villainess with a hankering for a dog-skin coat. Some elegantly understated design, and a full range of dog characterisation, most of it appealing. (Directors, Wolfgang Reitherman, Hamilton S. Luske, Clyde Geronimi. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*
- PARRISH** (*Warner-Pathé*) Boy into man, and man-versus-monopoly, amongst the tobacco fields of Connecticut. A virility-obsessed matinee piece, softly awash in Technicolor and choice moments of unintended humour. (Troy Donahue, Claudette Colbert, Karl Malden; director, Delmer Daves.)
- RETURN TO PEYTON PLACE** (*Fox*) Carol Lynley writes the novel that America Has Been Waiting For; her stepfather battles for its place in the school library; Mary Astor alone holds out. Watchable for Miss Astor's exemplary job of scene-stealing, and some fanciful notions about how best-sellers get written. (Eleanor Parker, Jeff Chandler, Tuesday Weld; director, José Ferrer. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)
- \***RING OF FIRE** (*M-G-M*) The Stones in form again with a very tall story about a deputy sheriff kidnapped by three teenagers, ending in the sort of orgy of destruction, forest fire, accusation and counter-accusation which takes one back to D. W. Griffith. (David Janssen, Joyce Taylor, Frank Gorshin; director, Andrew L. Stone. Metrocolor.)
- \*\*\***ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS** (*Hillcrest*) Visconti's controversial family saga of migrant Southerners in Milan. Savage in its preoccupation with corruption and sexual violence; specious as social and personal tragedy; remarkable in the quality of Annie Girardot's performance, and in the power and sweep of its visual style. (Renato Salvatori, Alain Delon, Katina Paxinou.)
- \***ROMANOFF AND JULIET** (*Rank*) Peter Ustinov stars in and directs a surprisingly staid version of his theatrically effective satire. (Akim Tamiroff, John Gavin, Sandra Dee. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*
- SEARCH FOR PARADISE** (*Cinerama*) Still in the fairground stage, this tour of Ceylon (local shrines), Hunza (polo and the Happy Land of Hunza lullaby), Kashmir (river boats), Nepal and Katmandu (coronation of King Mahendra) ends in a display of American air power. Lowell Thomas's commentary and Dimitri Tiomkin's 110-piece orchestra maintain a determined assault on nerves and ear-drums. (Director, Otto Lang. Technicolor, Cinerama.)
- SECRET PARTNER, THE** (*M-G-M*) Stewart Granger and Bernard Lee, both professional and good, in an otherwise dimly contrived and directed mystery thriller of theft and blackmail. (Haya Harareet, Hugh Burden, Conrad Phillips; director, Basil Dearden.)
- SECRET WAYS, THE** (*Rank*) Venal American adventurer on the run from Hungarian Communists. Conscienceless cliff-hanger, produced by and starring a haggard Richard Widmark. (Sonja Ziemann, Charles Regnier, Walter Rilla; director, Phil Karlson.)
- SOUTH PACIFIC** (*Fox*) High, wide and generally unhandsome version of the stage musical, stodgily directed by Joshua Logan. Happily the songs survive a welter of eccentric colour effects and jungle décor. (Rossano Brazzi, Mitzi Gaynor, John Kerr. Technicolor, Todd-AO.)
- \***SPARE THE ROD** (*BLC/British Lion/Bryanston*) Belated and timid version of Michael Croft's novel, with melodrama ousting authenticity and a radiant end that embraces Christmas, smiling Negroes, a discomfited bully and the hero (Max Bygraves) walking home with the nicest of the lady teachers on his arm. (Donald Pleasence, Geoffrey Keen, Betty McDowall; director, Leslie Norman.)
- \***SPARTACUS** (*Rank*) Howard Fast's story about Rome's slave uprising offers Stanley Kubrick the chance of an ambivalent dip into the blood-red waters of commercial Hollywood spectacle. With Laurence Olivier, Charles Laughton and Peter Ustinov on hand, the acting (and Rome) come off an indisputable best. (Kirk Douglas, Jean Simmons, Tony Curtis, John Gavin. Technicolor, Super Technirama-70.)
- \***TOWER OF LUST, THE** (*Compton*) A freakish 7-year-old version (by Abel Gance) of Dumas Père's romantic barnstormer about an obsessed Queen and her nightly-murdered lovers, including two long-lost sons. Rich, mock-classical mounting, pale-tinted Gevacolor, solid direction and execrable dubbing. (Silvana Pampanini, Pierre Brasseur, Paul Guers.)
- \*\***VIRGIN SPRING, THE** (*Contemporary*) Bergman's medieval ballad of rape, revenge, paganism and Christianity. Chilly and feverish by turns, and takes you about as far as you can expect to get in the cinema with other people's obsessions. (Max von Sydow, Birgitta Pettersson, Birgitta Valberg.)
- \***YOUNG SAVAGES, THE** (*United Artists*) From Evan (*Blackboard Jungle*) Hunter's novel, a muddle-headed though authentically staged account of New York's teenage gang warfare, disconcertingly overdirected by John Frankenheimer. (Burt Lancaster, Shelley Winters, Dina Merrill.) *Reviewed.*



**No. 1**

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